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Vol. 37 - No. 8

TIPS AND TECHS

FREELANCE PHOTOJOURNALISTS AND THE GIG ECONOMY: *THE PRICE OF INDEPENDENCE*

ICONIC PHOTOJOURNALISM MOMENTS THAT CHANGED HISTORY

THE ROLE OF DRONES AND REMOTE CAMERAS IN MODERN PHOTOJOURNALISM

PRO-PROFILE

CREDIBILITY IS THE CORE QUALITY OF PHOTOJOURNALISM

- Arko Datta

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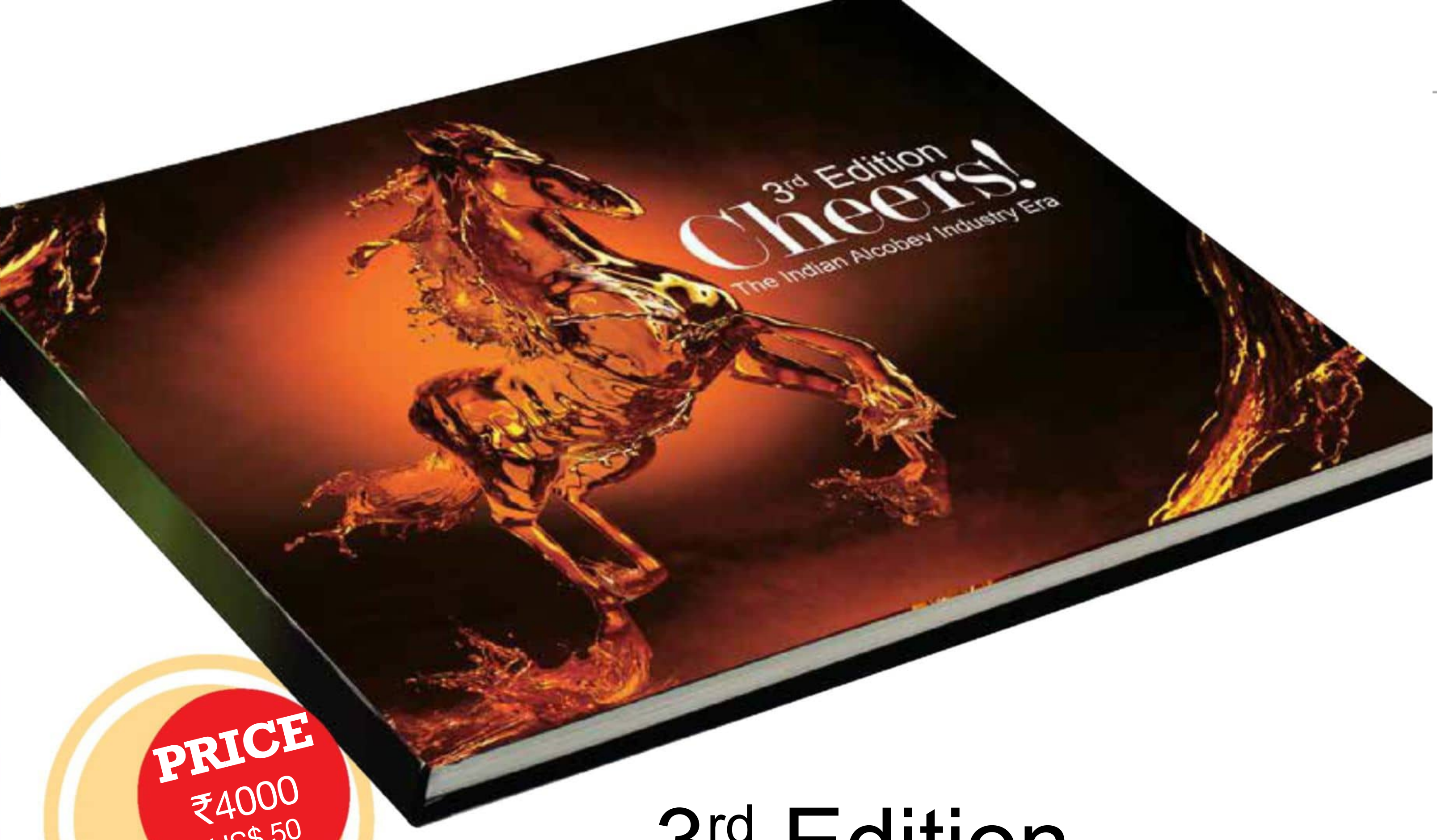

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The Ever Evolving Lens of Truth

There no doubt that the world today has reached a saturation point, from AI or image manipulation, or visuals that can be misleading. But one profession that still stands the virtue of time is Photojournalism. Even today it continues to stand tall - not just as a form of storytelling, but as a vehicle for truth, emotion and impact. And in this issue, we pay homage to that artform.

In our Pro Profile section, we pay homage to the craft of one of India's finest and most iconic names in the field - Arko Datta in an exclusive interview. His lens has captured moments that words could never fully express - raw, haunting and real.

From the grainy black-and-white frames of war zones to the high-definition aerial views captured by drones, photojournalism has evolved dramatically. The tools have changed, but the mission remains the same - to witness and share. Today, drone technology offers a bird's-eye view of conflict zones, climate disasters and protests, adding new layers of context and storytelling. Social media has also changed the game, allowing photojournalists to instantly share their work, build audiences and push boundaries beyond traditional publications.

Yet, amid this evolution, the heart of photojournalism remains unchanged - its ability to stop time, ignite dialogue and challenge the status quo. Arko Datta shares not just his journey, but also reflections on what makes an image unforgettable - composition, timing and above all, empathy.

For aspiring freelance photojournalists, the landscape is both promising and challenging. It's no longer enough to just take a great photo - you need to understand platforms, pitch effectively, and often, brand yourself. Diversifying income through stock photography, digital publications, grants, exhibitions and even workshops can open sustainable paths.

In this issue, we explore not just the legacy, but also the future of photojournalism. Through the eyes of legends and the tools of tomorrow, we celebrate a profession that continues to risk, reveal and remind us of the power of a single frame.

So, Until Next Time…
Happy Reading!!

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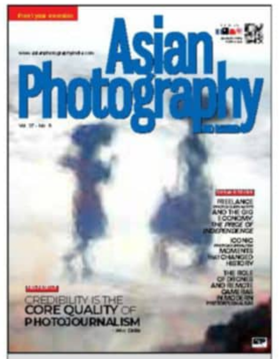

Asian Photography
CREDIBILITY IS THE CORE QUALITY OF PHOTOJOURNALISM

Image: Arko Datta / © Reuters
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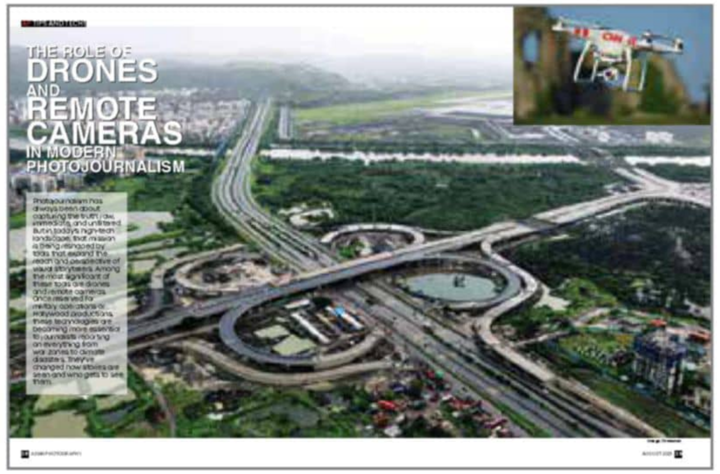

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LETTERS TO EDITOR

Readers' Comments and Suggestions...

Send your letters at apindia.feedback@gmail.com

LETTER OF THE MONTH
Photography

The Letter of the month will receive **1 Year subscription (12 E-Issues)**

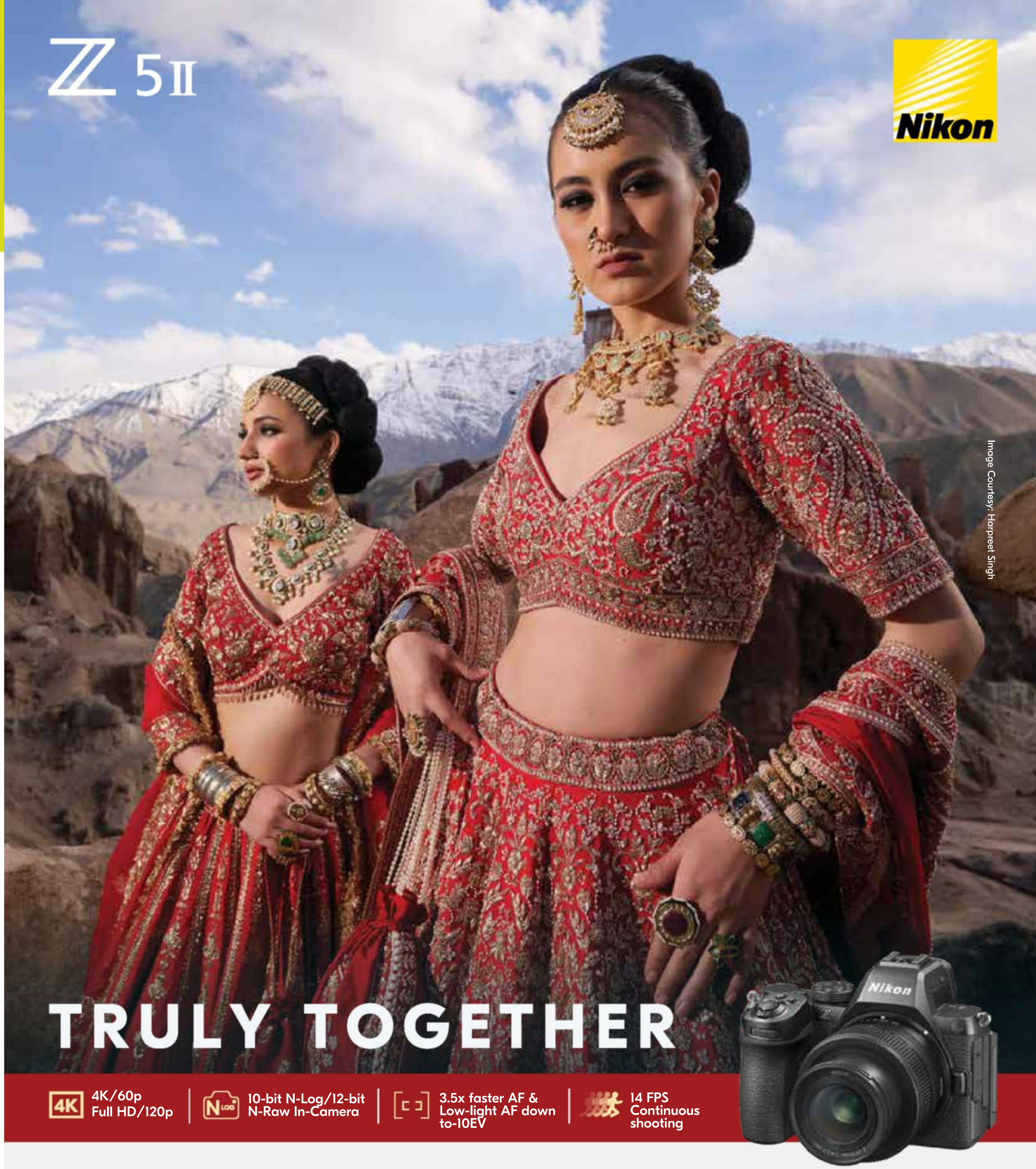
Dear Editor,

I bought the Nikon Z8 today and along with that the Nikon Z 50mm F/1.4 after watching your review and I must add that the combination of the results are just awesome.

Regs,
Samaz

Dear Samaz,

Well, you've bought a lethal combination. The Nikon Z8 is a very good camera and a combination of the 1.4, possibly one of the best prime lenses – undoubtedly the result has to be great. I hope you enjoy more of our reviews and also enjoy using the camera.



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Product Page

LETTERS TO EDITOR

Readers' Comments and Suggestions...

Send your letters at apindia.feedback@gmail.com

The Letter of the month will receive **1 Year subscription (12 E-Issues)**

Dear Sir,

I want to buy the OnePlus Nord 5 phone and was wondering if it is good for videography. I saw your review and in that you didn't mention whether it is good for that or not?

Regs,
Virender Singh

Never Settle

Dear Virender,

The phone overall is good – especially when it comes to camera and videos. In the price range that it is coming, it could possibly be the best option. As for videography, it should be able to do most things ok. Just don't expect it to work wonders at this price range.

Samsung Launches Galaxy Z Fold7 and Z Flip7

Samsung has announced the Galaxy Z Fold7, Galaxy Z Flip7, and Galaxy Z Flip7 FE.

Galaxy Z Fold7 weighs 215g and features an 8" main AMOLED display and a 6.5" cover screen. It includes the Snapdragon 8 Elite processor, One UI 8 based on Android 16, and a 200MP main camera. AI tools such as Generative Edit and real-time translation are integrated. The device supports multitasking and is rated IP48 for water resistance.

Galaxy Z Flip7 weighs 188g and includes a 4.1" FlexWindow and 6.9" main display. It runs on "the latest 3nm processor", has a 4,300mAh battery, and includes Samsung DeX support. The rear camera setup includes a 50MP wide and 12MP ultra-wide lens. Gemini Live is accessible from the cover screen, and One UI 8 allows voice interaction and app access without unfolding the device.

Galaxy Z Flip7 FE is a more affordable option with a 6.7" main display, a 50MP FlexCam. It is available in Black and White. All devices use Gorilla Glass, Armor Aluminum, and have IP48 water resistance.

Lexar Concludes Pan-India Partner Meet 'Lexar Udaan – Business Soaring in India'

Lexar
Lexar UDAAN
BUSINESS SOARING OVER INDIA
Lexar

Lexar concluded its all-India partner meet, 'Lexar Udaan – Business Soaring in India' recently. The event witnessed a participation of distributors, channel partners, and resellers from 46 cities across India. 'Lexar Udaan' served as a platform to celebrate the brand's growth in India, share future strategies, and spotlight its global innovation pipeline. The event brought together key stakeholders under one roof.

Fissal Oubida, General Manager, India, Middle East, Africa & CIS, Lexar Co., said, "Lexar Udaan represents more than just a partner meet, it's a celebration of our shared achievements and a reaffirmation of our commitment to innovation, quality, and channel empowerment. Our groundbreaking innovations are a testament to our continued leadership in high-performance storage solutions."

Throughout the three-day event, partners participated in interactive sessions, product showcases, and strategy workshops designed to enhance their understanding of Lexar's product portfolio and empower them to cater to the evolving demands of India's creators, gamers, professionals, and enterprises.

Rajeev Anand (Director Sales, India) added, "We remain committed to empowering our partners through hands-on training, market insights, and tailored strategies that help unlock new growth opportunities."

Canon Celebrates 20th Anniversary of EOS 5 Series

Canon is marking the 20th anniversary of its EOS 5 interchangeable-lens digital camera series. Launched in 2005 with the EOS 5D, the 5 series has played a key role in making full-frame photography more accessible. In 2008, the EOS 5D Mark II brought full-HD video capability to DSLRs, sparking widespread use of video in still cameras.

Subsequent models like the EOS 5D Mark III (2012), EOS 5Ds/5Ds R (2015), and EOS 5D Mark IV (2016) focussed on advancements in autofocus, resolution, and performance. In 2020, Canon introduced the EOS R5, the first mirrorless camera in the series with 8K video capability. Its successor, the EOS R5 Mark II (2024), has added AI-driven subject tracking and an advanced image processing system.

With eight models released over two decades, the EOS 5 series has been central to Canon's imaging evolution and many photographer's workflows. Canon says it will continue to innovate and support the creative community through ongoing development of the EOS 5 line.

Canon
Innovation in Progress
EOS 5 Series 20th Anniversary
20th
EOS R5 Mark II

Vivo launches X200FE at ₹54,999

Vivo has launched the X200 FE, a compact flagship smartphone with high-end features in a smaller form factor. It features a 6.31-inch AMOLED display with 1.5K resolution, 120Hz refresh rate, and peak brightness of 5,000 nits. The phone runs on the MediaTek Dimensity 9300+ processor and offers up to 16GB RAM and 512GB storage.

The rear camera setup includes a 50MP main sensor, a 50MP periscope telephoto lens with 3x zoom, and an 8MP ultra-wide lens, developed in partnership with Zeiss. It supports advanced photo and video features including Stage Mode and telephoto stabilization.

The X200 FE is powered by a 6,500mAh battery with 90W fast charging. It has an IP68/69 rating for water and dust resistance and operates on FunTouch OS based on Android 14.

In India, the X200 FE is priced at ₹54,999 for the 12GB + 256GB model and ₹59,999 for the 16GB + 512GB variant. It is available in Ember Yellow, Frost Blue, and Luxe Grey through Flipkart, Vivo's official website, and offline retail stores.

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Viltrox Fills Gap in DJI Inspire Drone Lens Lineup

Viltrox has unveiled the AF 90mm f/3.5 DL, the first third-party lens built specifically for DJI's Inspire 3 drone. Designed for aerial photography and cinematography, the full-frame lens is compatible with DJI's DL mount system, including the Ronin 4D and Zenmuse X9-Air gimbal camera.

Filling a gap in DJI's native lens lineup, the 90mm f/3.5 offers a mid-telephoto field of view ideal for compressed landscapes and high-fidelity 8K aerial video. The lens is lightweight at just 170 grams and compact at 63mm long, allowing smooth manoeuvrability on gimbal-mounted drones without the need for counterweights.

It features 12 elements in nine groups, including five ED and four HR glass elements, a nine-blade aperture diaphragm, and supports 52mm filters. Viltrox promises edge-to-edge sharpness even when shooting wide open. Autofocus is powered by a quiet STM motor, and the lens has a close focussing distance of 0.8 meters.

With its precise optics and ultra-light build, the Viltrox AF 90mm f/3.5 DL lens expands the creative capabilities of DJI drone users. It is now available for $459.

Insta360 Enters Drone Space, Launches Antigravity

Insta360 has launched Antigravity, a new drone brand developed in collaboration with third parties, marking a bold shift in aerial imaging. Unlike traditional drones, Antigravity introduces a new category focused on immersive 360° flight and intuitive controls, allowing users to capture their surroundings from every angle with no "advanced" piloting skills required.

"Antigravity represents the best of what can happen when we help incubate bold ideas," said Max Richter, Insta360 co-founder and VP of Marketing.

Targeted at creators of all levels, Antigravity drones are designed for instant takeoff and effortless storytelling. Dual-lens 360 capture ensures users never miss a shot, while post-editing flexibility puts storytelling first.

A key innovation is the Antigravity Hub, a community platform where users can offer feedback and co-create future features. Selected contributions may be rewarded, reinforcing the brand's open development approach. Safety is also a priority, with smart safeguards like payload detection built into the drone's first release.

Antigravity combines Insta360's imaging expertise with user-focused design, reimagining drone flight for a wider, more creative audience.

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- Camera control over Bluetooth or wired
- Auto tune gimbal motors for optimum camera balancing
- Max runtime of 14 hours and fast charging within 3 hours
- Lever type 3-axis balancing lock
- Dual layer quick release plate
- Regular knob
- 1/4"-20 with locating pin mounting point for accessories

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Sony Announces RX1R III

Nearly a decade after the RX1R II, Sony has revived its iconic compact full-frame line with the RX1R III, blending modern power with a familiar form. This long-awaited update inherits the 61MP sensor from the a7R IV, paired with the Bionz XR processor and a dedicated AI chip from the a7R V—delivering massive resolution, enhanced 693-point phase-detect AF, and advanced subject tracking.

While the classic Zeiss Sonnar 35mm f/2 lens remains unchanged since 2012, the camera now benefits from AI-driven autofocus, improved low-light performance, and leaf shutter flash sync up to 1/2000s at f/2. The RX1R III swaps the pop-up EVF for a rear-mounted 2.36M-dot finder, introduces a touchscreen (but loses tilt), and adopts a sleeker, more compact design with flush dials and a Multi-Interface hot shoe.

Sony also upgrades the battery to the NP-FW50, boosting rated shots from 220 to 300. However, the unchanged lens raises questions about how well it pairs with the ultra-high-res sensor.

Priced at $5,099, the RX1R III is aimed squarely at the high-end market—competing with Leica's Q3 and Fujifilm's GFX100RF—but it returns as one of the lightest, most compact full-frame options in its class.

DJI Launches Insta360 Rival Osmo360

DJI has unveiled the Osmo 360, its first 360-degree camera, claiming it offers the sharpest 360° photos on the market. It features a unique square Type 1 HDR image sensor that captures 120MP panoramic photos and 30.7MP single-lens shots, outperforming rivals like Insta360's X5. The Osmo 360 is also the first to record 8K50 video and shoot 8K30 continuously for 100 minutes.

With 2.4μm pixels, an f/1.9 lens, and 13.5 stops of dynamic range, it promises excellent low-light performance.

The Osmo 360 doubles as a single-lens action camera, recording 5K60 and 4K120 video with up to 170° FOV. Standard features include gesture/voice control, horizon leveling, autofocus tracking, and invisible selfie stick mode.

Weighing at 183g, the Osmo 360 is IP68-rated, waterproof up to 10m, and charges to 50% in 12 minutes. An optional Battery Extension Rod boosts its runtime to 180 minutes.

Pricing starts at $549.99, with higher-tier bundles like the Adventure ($699.99) and Vlog Combo ($760) also available.

Yashica Launches "Film-like" Digital Cameras

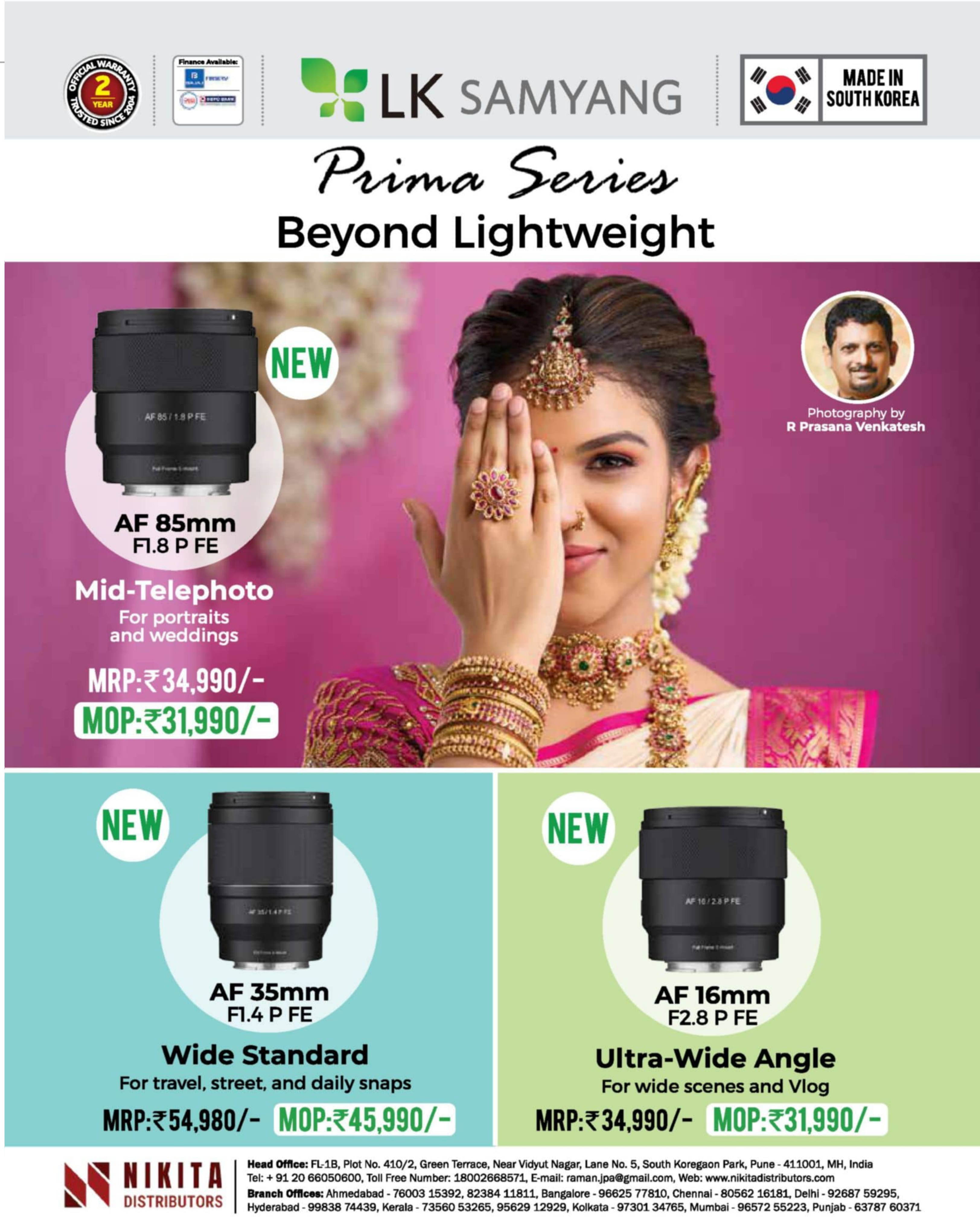
Yashica makes a stylish return with its new FX-D digital camera series: FX-D 100, FX-D 300, and FX-D S300. Blending retro design with modern tech, these compact cameras are built for creators who crave the film aesthetic but love digital ease.

All three feature Yashica's signature styling, complete with a tactile film advance lever and six built-in film simulations like Ruby 60s and Mono 400, delivering vintage tones straight out of the camera.

The FX-D 100 is a beginner-friendly option with a 13MP Sony sensor, 3x zoom, and hybrid autofocus/manual controls—ideal for vlogging and everyday photography. The FX-D 300 steps things up with a 50MP sensor, 24mm f/1.8 lens, crop modes, and strong low-light performance. Both support 4K/30p video and 120fps slow-motion.

For serious shooters, the FX-D S300 adds a digital viewfinder and 3-axis stabilisation for focused, immersive shooting.

All models connect to the Yashica app for instant sharing. Prices start at £245, with the FX-D 100 and 300 launching in September and the S300 arriving in October.



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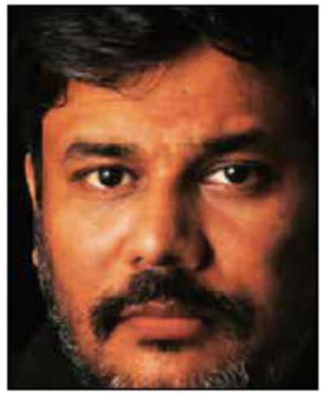
CREDIBILITY IS THE CORE QUALITY OF PHOTOJOURNALISM



Arko Datta

Whenever you think about Photojournalism – a handful of names come to mind, and **Arko Datta** is surely one of them. The World Press Photo winner has championed this artform and shot some of the most iconic images that we've seen in recent history. In a conversation with **Bhavya Desai,** he speaks his mind about how photojournalism has changed today, technology and more. Excerpts:

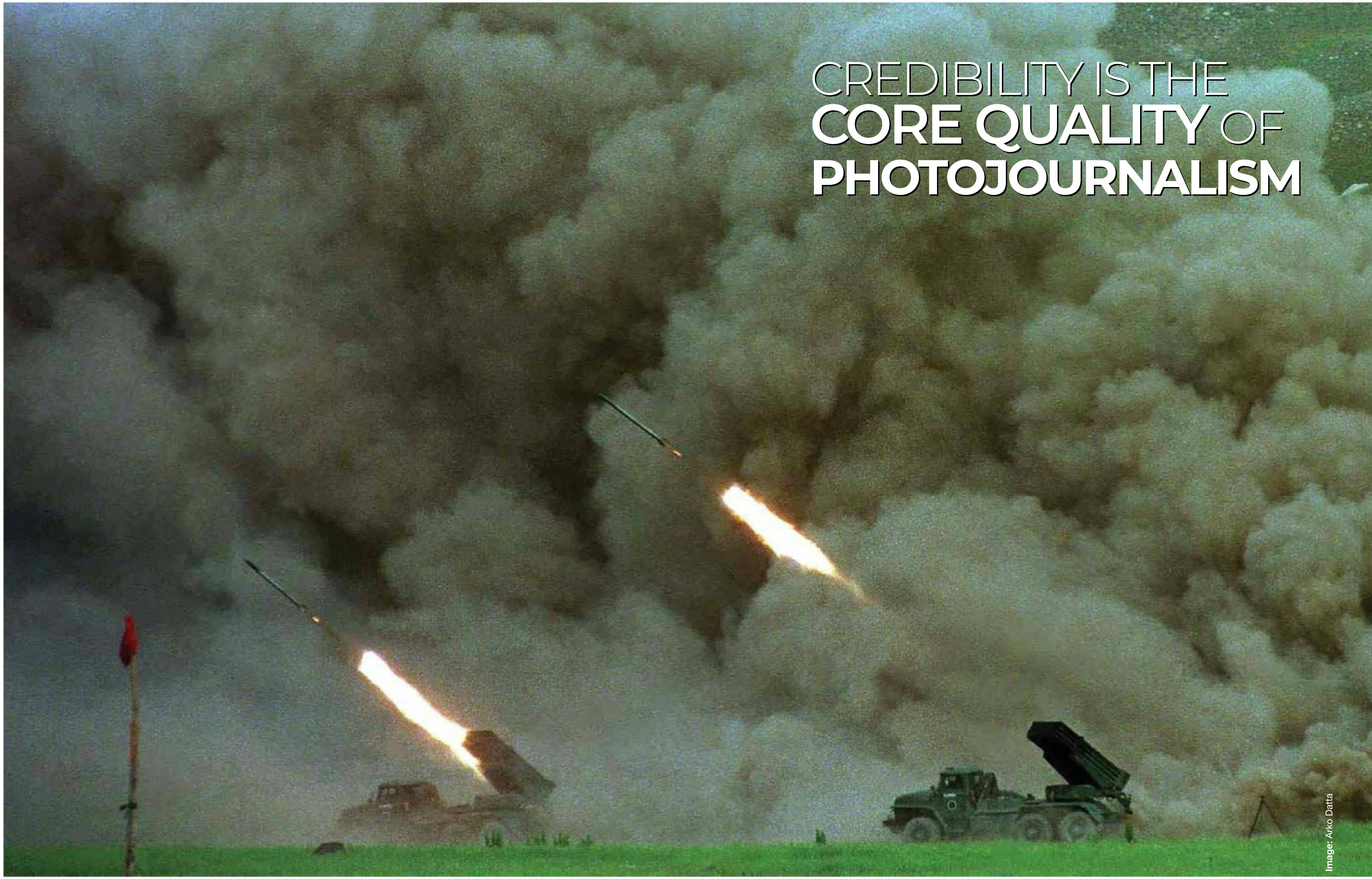


Image: Arko Datta

Indian MBRLs firing during Kargil war 1999

Iraq war

Image: Arko Datta / © Reuters

Looking back - what are some of the most memorable moments or assignments that stand out?

Frankly, all assignments are equally important to me. It may sound cliched, but it's true. Unfortunately, I have no favourites. For the viewers, some images were more relevant or striking than the others. But for me, I gave my 100% for all assignments and therefore I am equally connected to all images and all assignments.

But yes, in some assignments I did have unique moments, some thrilling, some scary. Some images got noticed more, some less. But would a father love a child less, because others have cared less about the child? Well, it's true when the images do end up helping someone or making an immediate difference to someone's life, they are very satisfying.

That's interesting. Do you think the core qualities of a great photojournalist have changed over time, or do the fundamentals still remain the same?

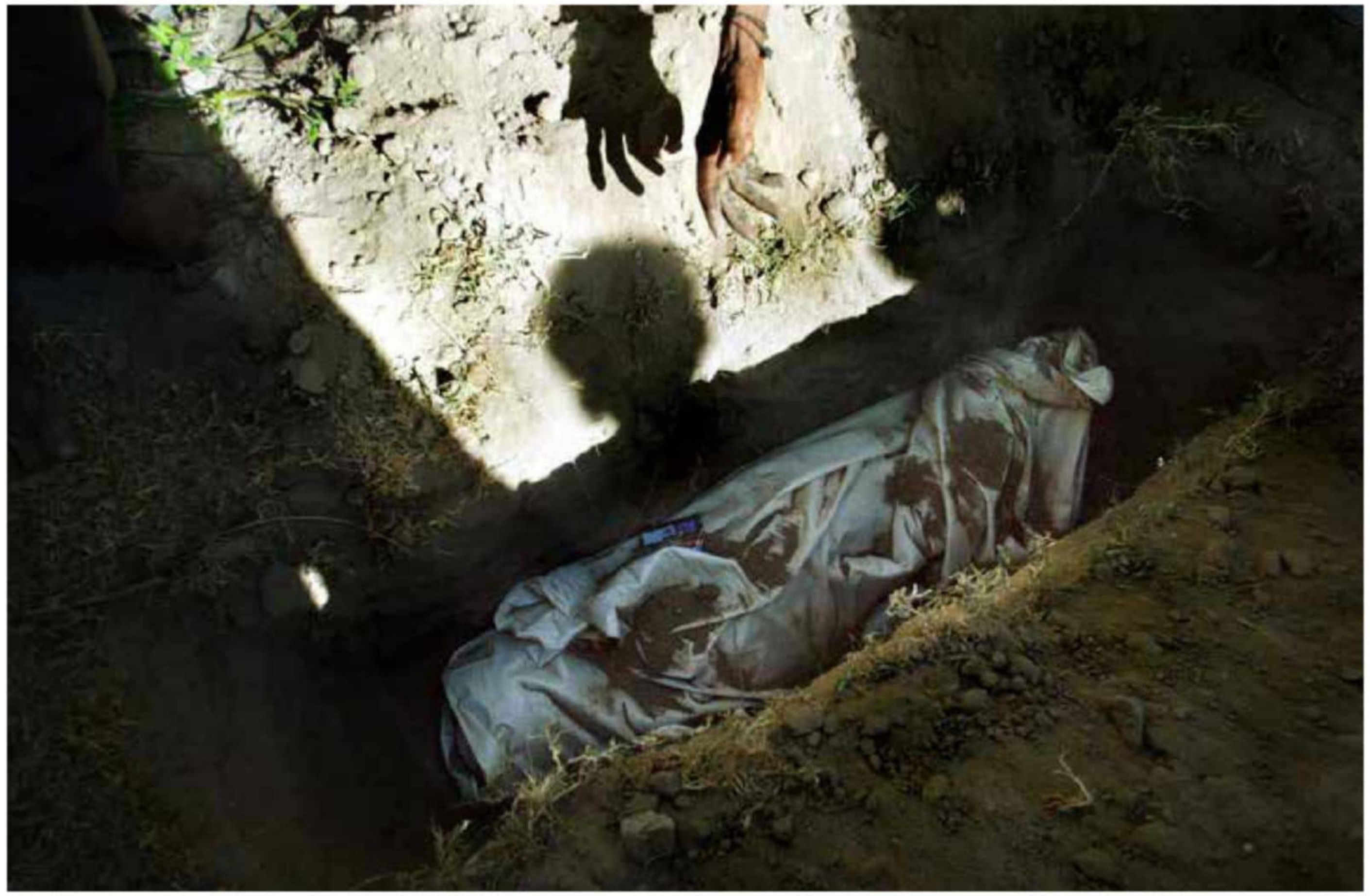
The core qualities of photojournalism can't change over time. They are cast in iron. And the most important of them is credibility. Credibility of the photograph and the photographer is uncompromisable, even more so nowadays in the times of photoshop and AI imaging.

How was photojournalism different when you started - both in terms of technology and the approach towards stories?

In technology there has been a sea change. I started off with film cameras. Dark room knowledge of processing and printing was mandatory. It was time consuming and expensive to learn on your own as a hobby. And later while working professionally in wire services it was quite a challenge for outstation assignments as we had to travel with all the darkroom equipment and chemicals. And even with large photofax machines.

Most often I had to set up the darkroom in the hotel bathrooms. But making the hotel bathrooms light-tight was also gruelling. The whole process was quite tedious and exhausting, but what made it worse was that so many times in trying to meet deadlines, I had to leave the spot (of news) and go back to my hotel to send photos, due to which I would end up missing images and moments that would happen during my absence.

Later with the advent of film scanners the process was made somewhat shorter and easier. We didn't have to make prints any longer, so didn't have to carry heavy enlargers and the big plastic trays. Also with new colour chemicals, the steps in processing were reduced and we didn't need strict temperature control. This enabled us to process on the spot and scan the negatives into our laptops and send the images instantly, as long as we had a power connection for the scanner. It was that much more useful while covering sports. However, the new challenge of sending images from the spot was getting good phone connection to connect to either the modem or the internet. It used to take ages to send images, especially from remote areas due to slow data speeds. Infact, we used to joke, that taking photos was just 10% of the job, sending was 90%.



Father placing chocolate in son's grave who died in school fire

Image: Arko Datta / © Reuters

With the change of the century, the singular most significant change was the advent of digital cameras. While many classical purists at that time didn't like moving away from film cameras – many still have stuck to it. But for me as a wire service photographer, working in *AFP* at that time, it was a huge boon. No more processing, no carrying chemicals. Just shoot and connect the card to the USB port. And not only this made life easy for us wire service photographers, we didn't have to miss any moments as we could send photos from the spot.

And with digital films (CF/SD cards) being reusable medium, we didn't have to any longer worry about overshooting or using too many of the expensive films. This was particularly useful for sports photography.

However, looking back, I realise that serious shooting and technical skills were required to shoot many events especially sports as the auto-focusing capabilities of the earliest digital cameras were very limited. But nowadays

A protest in Delhi 2001

Image: Arko Datta

Empty Gulbarg Housing Society

Image: Arko Datta

autofocus is so good that even a newbie wouldn't find sports photography difficult. And this combined with high-speed motor drives, one hardly misses any moment and the quality of sports photography has moved up many notches.

In pre-digital era, high-end professional cameras were limited to professionals, so most of the journalistic images were being photographed by professionals. And hard news was one of the most dramatic and exciting aspect of photojournalism. But with digital cameras there has been a major shift in that. Hard news, also called spot news photography, has almost shifted from professionals to amateurs.

Naroda Patiya

Image: Arko Datta

Almost everyone is walking around with a good camera today, called the mobile phone. So often its amateurs who are present during breaking news events and they shoot those dramatic images and upload to social media, much before any professional photojournalist can arrive at the scene. So professional photojournalism is moving more towards documentary and experimental style of storytelling. New kind of forms and styles have become acceptable even in classical photojournalism.

Another big change is the high-end video capability in modern cameras. This is an exciting new addition, which most photojournalists are loving. Great video stories have been done by photojournalists across the world, winning many awards, including the Oscar. So, a new window of opportunity has opened up for photojournalists, which would still take quite a while for amateurs to master. It's easy to shoot a video, but difficult to shoot a good video. And even more difficult to make a good video story, with good sound and editing.

That was my next question - with the rise of social media, every citizen is essentially documenting a scene, do you feel added pressure as a professional photojournalist to stand out or be first?

Personally, I never felt that pressure. Because professionals deliver a different quality in photography and story-telling. They also understand global sensibilities, which amateurs will find difficult to match. They shoot what they see, and sometimes it suffices and those pics shot by amateurs go viral as well. But many times, you need to go beyond what you see right in front of you, even in a breaking news story. Also, in situations that are dangerous, hardly any amateurs shoot that, at least in India. During the 26th November 2008 terror attacks in Mumbai, did you see any images by amateurs? Is there any image of Kasab by amateurs, or any photos shot from inside Taj hotel by amateurs, who were already there? NONE. All of those images were shot by professionals.

In an age dominated by fake news and misinformation, how do you ensure your work uncovers and reflects the truth?

I had always done my work in the same manner unaffected by social media. And for me the top of the priority has always been credibility, ahead of speed or creativity. And fortunately, I worked for organisations which also valued it. I respect them for upholding the ethics of journalism and preserving credibility. But I can't say the same for many Indian news media. They not only ignore journalistic ethics but they actually encourage photographers to go ahead with unethical practices like setting-up images, photoshopping images etc. It's disappointing.

Do you think photojournalism is still commercially viable in today's media landscape?

Yes, it is and will be. But not any longer for the mediocre. Perhaps not even for the good. But the brilliant will always be there. There will always be space for them.

How do you think AI is impacting photojournalism - especially in terms of ethics and credibility? We've already seen several examples of manipulated content.

AI and photojournalism are antithesis of each other. They are two opposite poles and need to stay as far away from each other. There is no space for AI in photojournalism. Yes, there will be use of AI for representative images in newspapers and magazines, which the illustrators or the art department will create. But it's not the job of photojournalists. AI is a lot of fun, but it can affect the credibility of a photojournalist even if he or she uploads AI images to his or her social media just for fun. This will put into question his or her other photojournalistic work. People will start questioning all the work of the photojournalist. Can ever that photojournalist' work be used as a testimony, after having shown his or her prowess in AI images? So why give this opportunity to anyone to raise their fingers at your work. For a photojournalist, showing one's ability to create high quality AI images can be a career-breaking skill to publicly display.

Naroda Patiya

Image: Arko Datta

Image: Arko Datta

Naroda Patiya

Do you believe photojournalism is dying? Can you imagine a future where there are no dedicated photojournalists left?

Not at all. Maybe the opportunities will reduce, the space will decrease, but it's far from dying. Infact the importance of professional photojournalists and credible photojournalistic organisations like *Reuters, Magnum* etc will increase in the times of fake images and AI imaging.

Professional photojournalists who strictly adhere to ethics of photojournalism and are creative, have the sensitivity of story-telling, have technical knowledge of photography and are mentally and physically fit to shoot and stay in any condition is a difficult combination to find. And these photojournalists and their work can't be matched and therefore they will always be in demand.

Do you think photography education in India is still difficult to access? You attempted to address this with Udaan - how was that experience?

It's true, especially in photojournalism. Good quality education in photojournalism is difficult to find as most professionals understandably find it difficult to dedicate time

Image: Arko Datta

Naroda Patiya

Image: Arko Datta / © Reuters

Tsunami

Image: Arko Datta

Mother Teresa funeral day

Image: Arko Datta

India Australia Cricket 2001

Image: Arko Datta / © Reuters

Afghanistan

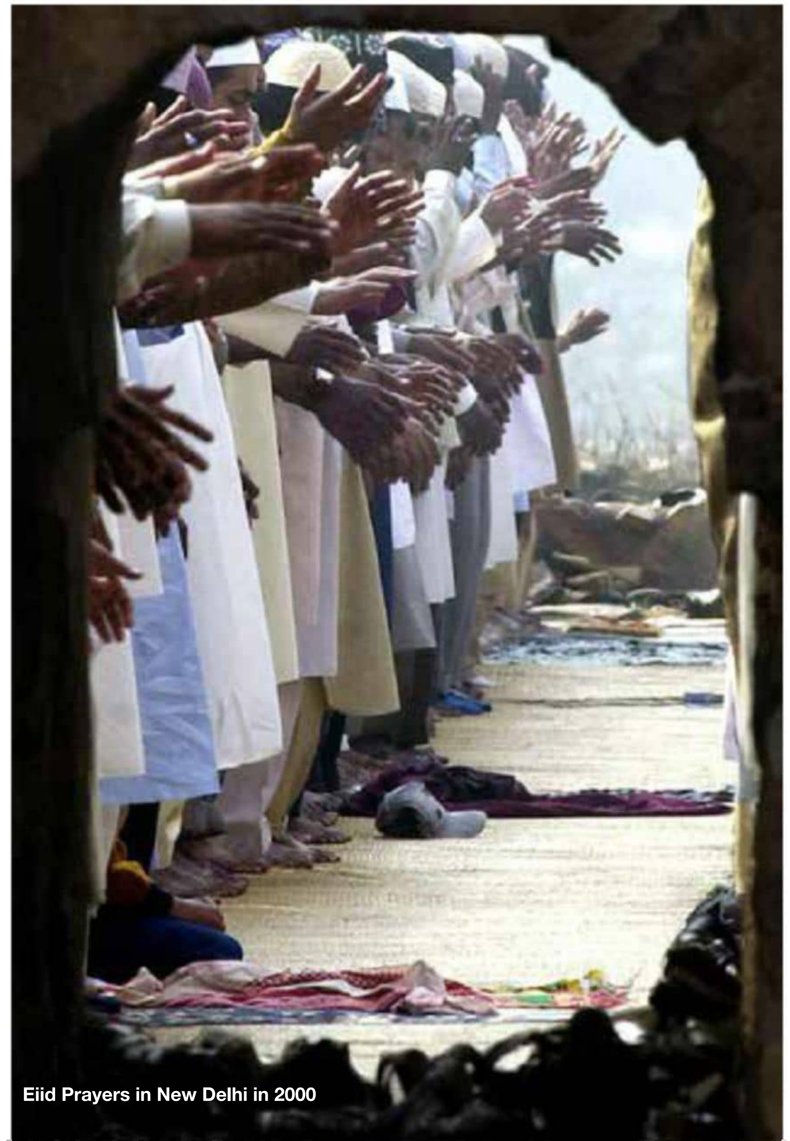


Image: Arko Datta

Eiid Prayers in New Delhi in 2000

for teaching due to the erratic nature of their work or simply may not want to teach. And moreover, there are very few photojournalists in India who have had intensive exposure to high-end, high-quality photojournalism. And most of them naturally won't have time to teach, being busy with assignments. And their schedule is never known or fixed.

At Udaan I took time-off in middle of my career to teach. I had to refuse many lucrative offers, as I had a responsibility towards the students who had enrolled thinking that I would teach. And I did. I gave all my time, all my focus to students. I owed it to them. And it was a very meaningful and satisfying process. I had all my life thought about my own photography, my own bylines etc., but it was a new and a very fulfilling experience to be a part of the journey of other young aspiring photojournalists. It was non-competitive (unlike working in wire service) and more meditative. I was drawn to teaching, perhaps it was in my DNA, as both my parents had done that.

To see the bylines of students was even more thrilling and satisfying than seeing my own, which I had seen all my life. Seeing the first bylines of each student felt like seeing my own byline for the first time. And when students got their first jobs, got their first salaries as photojournalist, was a very fulfilling moment, like seeing a young bird flying out of a nest. And so many of them are doing so well, working in top newspapers and global news services. One of our brilliant student, Anushree Fadnavis went on to win the coveted Pulitzer Prize, for her coverage of Hong Kong riots. My emotions were beyond pride!

Which photographers or bodies of work would you recommend every aspiring photojournalist should study or be inspired by?

Their own thoughts. They should be inspired by their own thoughts and by their own observations of life. Those aspiring to be photojournalists, should first understand themselves, their thoughts and their emotions. And they should go around the city, shooting what they like, as they like, untouched by any influence of any other photographer. The photos should bring out the essence of that person, and shouldn't mimic the style and composition of any other photographer.

The photos maybe simple or even puerile, but definitely they will be unique and honest. The young budding photographers need to find themselves through their photography, not copy anyone else. There is no need to bring in any other element in between the photographer's mind and the subject in front. He or she should select subjects they like and compose the images as they like. They should be on their own without the support of other people's photography. It's only after one does this for a while, should one start seeing the works of professionals. And one shouldn't see just one professional's work, but many. One should avoid being influenced by one single photographer, then even inadvertently the youngster will start copying that style. Maintaining one's individual thinking and essence is important.

Image: Arko Datta

Bhuj Earthquake

In a world that thrives on visual information, photojournalism has played a vital role in documenting history, uncovering truth, and shaping public perception. The journey from bulky film cameras to compact smartphones is not just a technological progression—it's a revolution in the way stories are captured and shared. Understanding the evolution of photojournalism offers valuable insight into the power of the visual medium, the shifting responsibilities of the photographer, and the dynamic nature of truth in the digital era.

THE EVOLUTION OF PHOTOJOURNALISM: FROM FILM TO SMARTPHONES

The Birth of a Visual Narrative

The origins of photojournalism trace back to the mid-19th century, shortly after the invention of photography. One of the earliest known war photographers, Roger Fenton, captured scenes from the Crimean War in the 1850s. His work, though staged due to long exposure times, laid the groundwork for the idea that photography could be a historical record.

By the early 20th century, photography had become a potent storytelling tool. Photojournalists began to document everyday life, conflict, and societal change with increasing accuracy and immediacy. Magazines like *Life* and *National Geographic* offered platforms for visual storytelling, combining compelling imagery with investigative journalism.

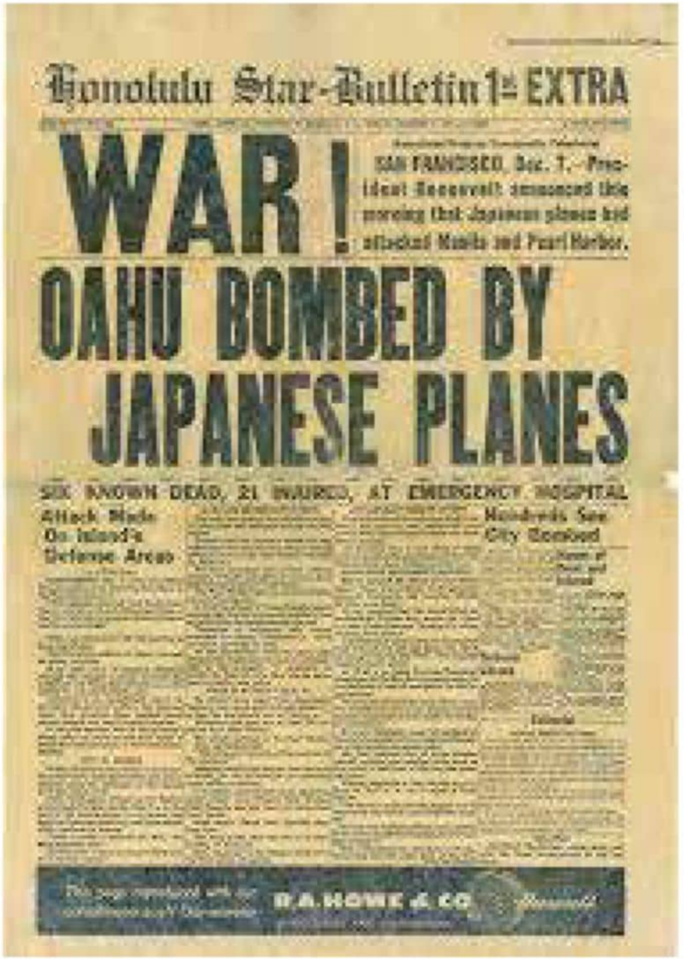
The Golden Age of Photojournalism

The 1930s to the 1970s are often considered the golden era of photojournalism. Advances in film technology, particularly the development of 35mm cameras like the Leica, allowed photographers to work more discreetly and rapidly. This period saw the rise of legendary photojournalists such as Robert Capa, Margaret Bourke-White, Henri Cartier-Bresson, and Dorothea Lange.

Their work defined generations, capturing moments of triumph, suffering, war, and revolution. The black-and-white images of D-Day, the Great Depression, and the Civil Rights Movement remain iconic to this day. These photographs didn't just accompany stories—they were the stories.

From Analogue to Digital: A Paradigm Shift

The late 20th century ushered in a dramatic shift with the introduction of digital photography. In the 1990s, newspapers and wire services began transitioning from film to digital cameras, which offered instant review and faster editing



Honolulu Star-Bulletin 1st EXTRA

WAR!

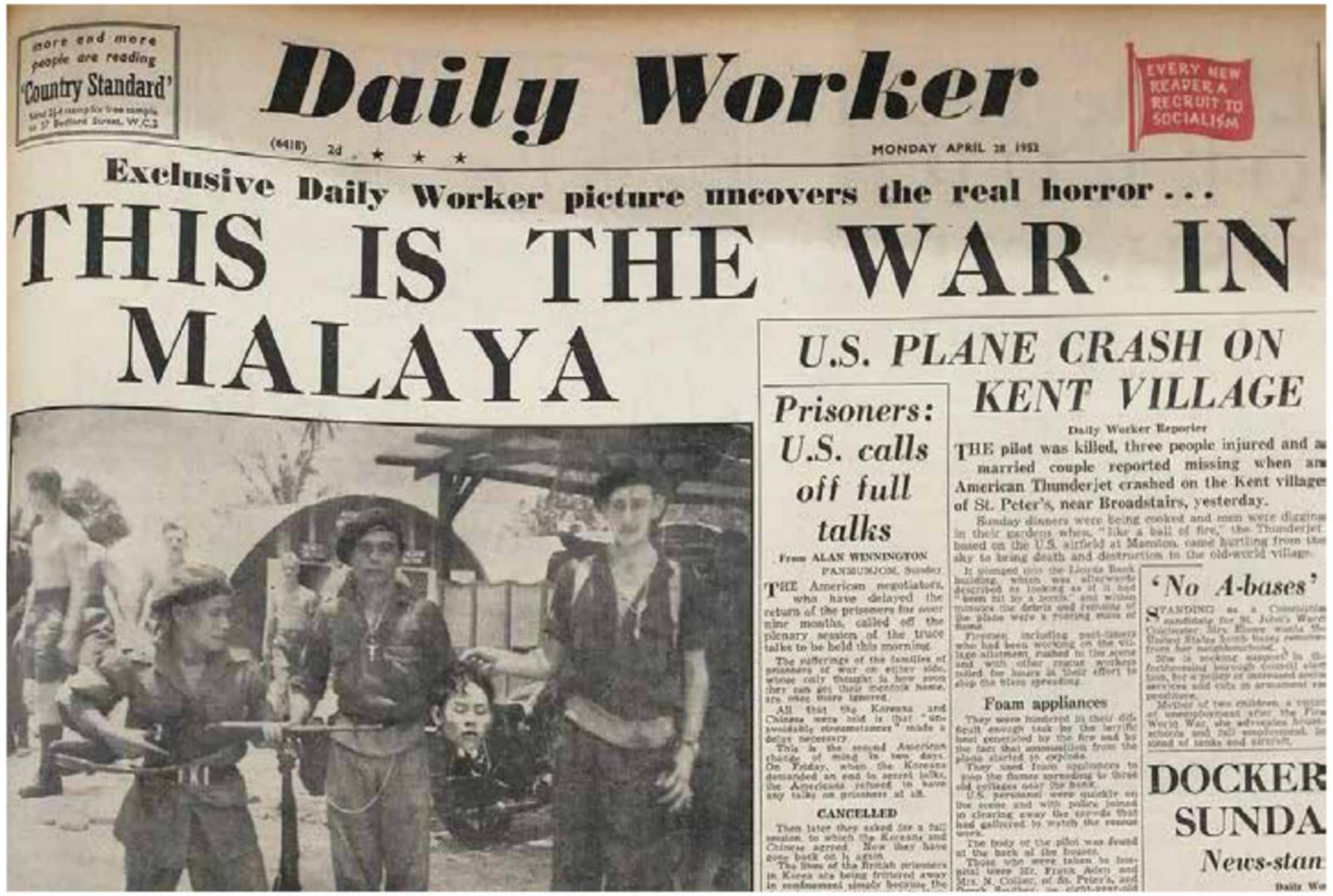
SAN FRANCISCO, Dec. 7.—President Roosevelt announced this morning that Japanese planes had attacked Manila and Pearl Harbor.

OAHU BOMBED BY JAPANESE PLANES

SIX KNOWN DEAD, 21 INJURED, AT EMERGENCY HOSPITAL

Attack Made On Island's Defense Areas

Hundreds See City Bombed



more and more people are reading 'Country Standard'

Daily Worker

(6418) 2d ★ ★ ★ MONDAY APRIL 28 1952

EVERY NEW READER A RECRUIT TO SOCIALISM

Exclusive Daily Worker picture uncovers the real horror . . .

THIS IS THE WAR IN MALAYA

U.S. PLANE CRASH ON KENT VILLAGE

Daily Worker Reporter

THE pilot was killed, three people injured and a married couple reported missing when an American Thunderjet crashed on the Kent village of St. Peter's, near Broadstairs, yesterday.

Prisoners: U.S. calls off full talks

From ALAN WINNINGTON

PANMUNJOM, Sunday

THE American negotiators, who have delayed the return of the prisoners for over nine months, called off the plenary session of the truce talks to be held this morning.

CANCELLED

Foam appliances

'No A-bases'

DOCKER SUNDA

News-stan

and transmission. By the early 2000s, digital SLRs (DSLRs) became standard gear for professional photojournalists.

Digital photography democratised the field. With fewer barriers to entry, more photographers could practice and publish their work. However, it also raised new concerns about image manipulation and the authenticity of photographs. Photoshop and other editing tools made it easier to enhance or alter images, challenging traditional notions of photographic truth.

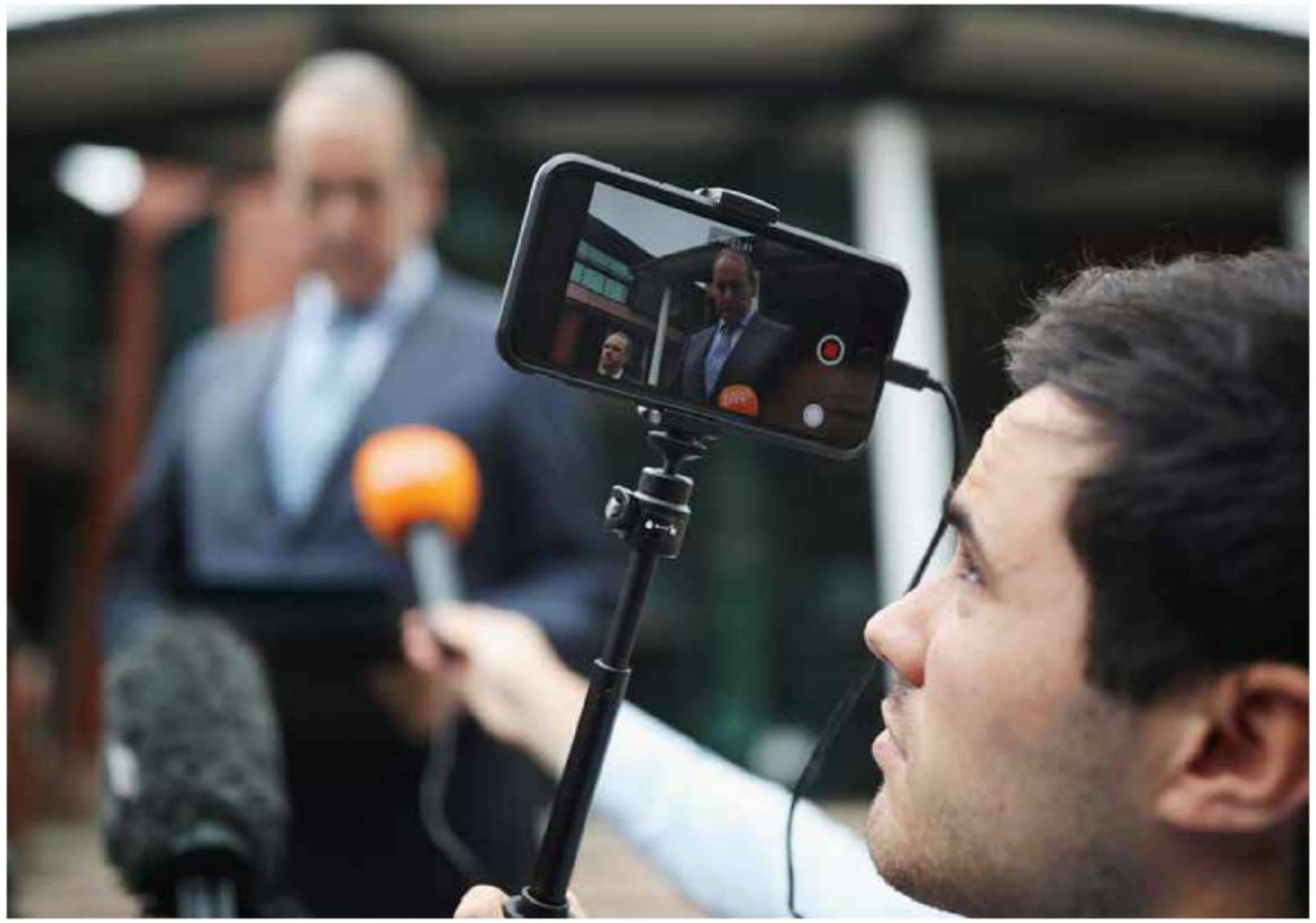
The Rise of Citizen Journalism and Smartphones

The most disruptive development in recent years has been the rise of smartphones. With powerful cameras in every pocket, the line between professional photojournalist and everyday witness has blurred. Major news events—from protests to natural disasters—are often first captured and shared by bystanders rather than trained journalists.

Social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok have turned everyone into a potential documentarian. Images can be uploaded instantly and viewed globally within seconds. While this democratisation has brought attention to underreported stories and regions, it has also introduced challenges around context, credibility, and misinformation.

Ethics and Verification in the Digital Age

With the speed and accessibility of image sharing comes



the responsibility to verify and contextualise. Photojournalists today must navigate a landscape filled with doctored images, AI-generated content, and viral misinformation. Fact-checking organisations and reverse image search tools have become essential in separating truth from fiction.

Professional photojournalists are increasingly expected to provide metadata, timestamps, and background information to validate their work. Ethical standards are more crucial than ever. Trust, once granted by default to the photographer, now must be continually earned.

Impact of Technology on Technique and Style

Modern tools have also influenced the aesthetic and storytelling techniques of photojournalism. High ISO capabilities, drone photography, 360-degree cameras, and mobile editing apps have expanded the creative possibilities. Photojournalists can now shoot in low light, capture aerial perspectives, and produce immersive content that brings audiences closer to the scene.

However, the emphasis on speed and immediacy sometimes comes at the cost of depth. The 24/7 news cycle pressures photographers to deliver quickly, leaving less time for thoughtful composition or long-form visual storytelling. Still, some outlets and independent photographers continue to prioritise depth over clicks, keeping the spirit of documentary photojournalism alive.

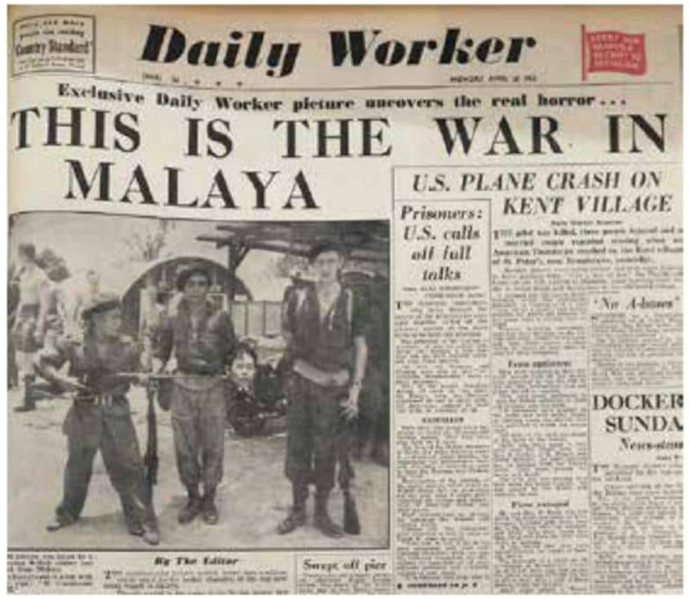
The Role of the Photojournalist Today

In today's media landscape, the photojournalist is not just an observer but often an interpreter, advocate, and even a curator. With platforms like Substack, Instagram, and Patreon, photographers can build their own audiences, bypassing traditional gatekeepers. This shift has enabled greater creative freedom, but also demands new skills in marketing, branding, and audience engagement.

Collaborative journalism is also on the rise. Photographers increasingly work alongside writers, filmmakers, and data analysts to create multi-dimensional stories. This interdisciplinary approach enriches the narrative and provides a more holistic view of complex issues.

Education, Accessibility, and Representation

As technology makes photography more accessible, education plays a critical role in maintaining quality and ethical standards. Workshops, online courses, and photography collectives help emerging photographers learn not just technique, but also responsibility.



Daily Worker

Exclusive Daily Worker picture uncovers the real horror . . .

THIS IS THE WAR IN MALAYA

U.S. PLANE CRASH ON KENT VILLAGE

Prisoners: U.S. calls off full talks

DOCKER SUNDA

By The Editor

Swept off pier

Representation within photojournalism is another crucial area of growth. Historically, the field has been dominated by Western, male perspectives. Today, organisations like Women Photograph and Diversify Photo work to elevate voices from marginalised communities. Local photographers bring unique insights to stories within their own regions, fostering a more accurate and respectful portrayal of diverse experiences.

The Future: Challenges and Opportunities

Looking ahead, photojournalism faces both daunting challenges and exciting opportunities. The rise of AI and synthetic media will test the boundaries of visual truth. Journalists must adapt, adopting new tools while adhering to timeless principles of integrity and accuracy.

At the same time, innovations like immersive storytelling and augmented reality could redefine how we experience news photography. Imagine walking through a 3D-rendered refugee camp based on real photographs or exploring historical events through layered visual timelines. The possibilities are vast.

Conclusion: The Frame Still Matters

The evolution of photojournalism is a testament to the enduring power of the still image. From film to smartphones, from darkrooms to digital clouds, photography continues to shape how we see and understand the world. Each technological leap has brought new tools and new voices, but the core mission remains the same: to bear witness, tell the truth, and provoke thought.

As audiences, we must not only consume images, but also question them—who took this? Why? What's missing from the frame? In doing so, we honour the legacy of those who risk everything to bring light to darkness, one frame at a time.

TEXT: RAJAN GUPTA

FREELANCE PHOTOJOURNALISTS AND THE GIG ECONOMY: THE PRICE OF INDEPENDENCE

In an era where news is instant, digital, and global, the demand for compelling visuals has never been higher. Yet many of the images that define our understanding of world events are captured not by staff photographers, but by freelance photojournalists, who are independent operators navigating the precarious world of the gig economy. Their independence gives them creative freedom and the ability to chase stories mainstream outlets might ignore. But that freedom comes with steep costs: financial insecurity, lack of institutional support, and physical danger without backup. As media companies increasingly shift toward contract work and budget cuts, the freelance photojournalist sits at the crossroads of passion and exploitation.

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The Rise of the Gig-Based Visual Journalist

The decline of traditional media outlets and their shrinking budgets has seen a decline in full-time photojournalism positions. Once, newspapers and magazines kept staff photographers on payroll, covering beats and international stories with the backing of an organisation. Today, those staff jobs are rare. In their place: freelance contributors paid per image, per assignment, or not at all unless a photo goes viral.

This shift mirrors broader trends in the gig economy, where flexibility and independence are emphasised often at the expense of stability. Freelancers now make up a significant portion of the journalism workforce. For photojournalists, freelancing isn't a stepping stone. It's the new norm.

The Freedom to Choose, With Limits

One of the few genuine benefits of freelancing is autonomy. Freelance photojournalists choose what stories to chase, what angles to shoot, and how to build their portfolios. They aren't beholden to an editor's assignment list or a corporate agenda. This freedom allows them to cover marginalized communities, underreported conflicts, and slow-burning crises that don't trend on social media or generate advertising dollars.

But independence doesn't always mean access. Without official press credentials, freelancers can be blocked from crime scenes, protest zones, or war-torn areas. They may lack the support networks staff photographers rely on—fixers, translators, drivers, security briefings. In many places, being an independent journalist doesn't just mean being alone. It means being vulnerable.

Financial Precarity

The most pressing challenge freelance photojournalists face is financial instability. Pay-per-assignment rates vary wildly. Very often, freelancers are asked to submit "on spec" or provide free images for "exposure". Even when compensation is offered, payment can be delayed for weeks or months, with little recourse.

There are also significant overhead costs: travel, lodging, insurance, camera gear, editing software. A single assignment might cost more to cover than it earns. And unlike salaried employees, freelancers receive no benefits—no health insurance, no paid leave, no retirement plan. Every sick day, injury, or equipment failure can threaten their ability to work at all.

In this environment, many rely on side gigs—wedding photography, corporate shoots, teaching—or take on dangerous assignments just to make ends meet.

High Risk, Low Protection

Freelance photojournalists are often first on the scene and last to leave. Whether it's a war zone, a refugee camp, or a protest turned violent, they go where the story leads—even without institutional backing. But when things go wrong, they're largely on their own.

Unlike staff journalists who may have access to legal support, emergency extraction, or safety training, freelancers are often self-funded and self-reliant. If they're detained, injured, or killed, there's usually no newsroom mobilising to intervene or support their families.

In 2021, the International Federation of Journalists reported that many of the journalists killed on the job were freelancers. The risks they take to tell the world's stories often go unnoticed until tragedy strikes.

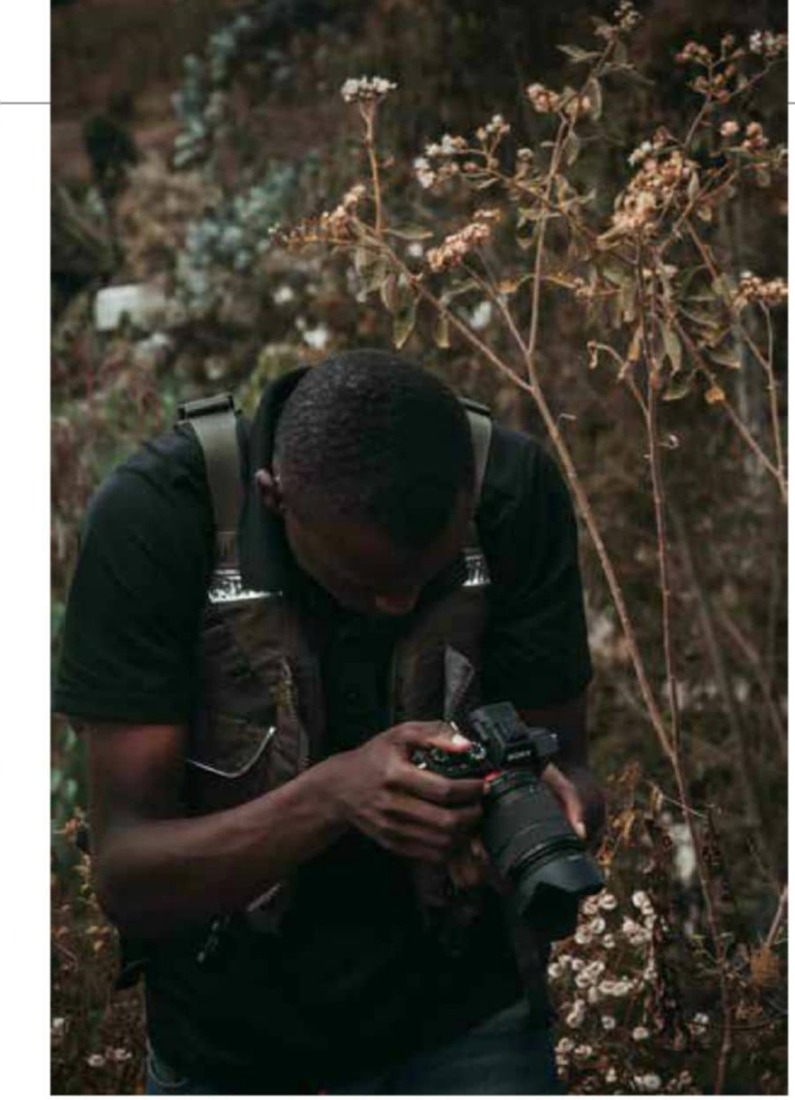
Credit, Ownership, and Exploitation

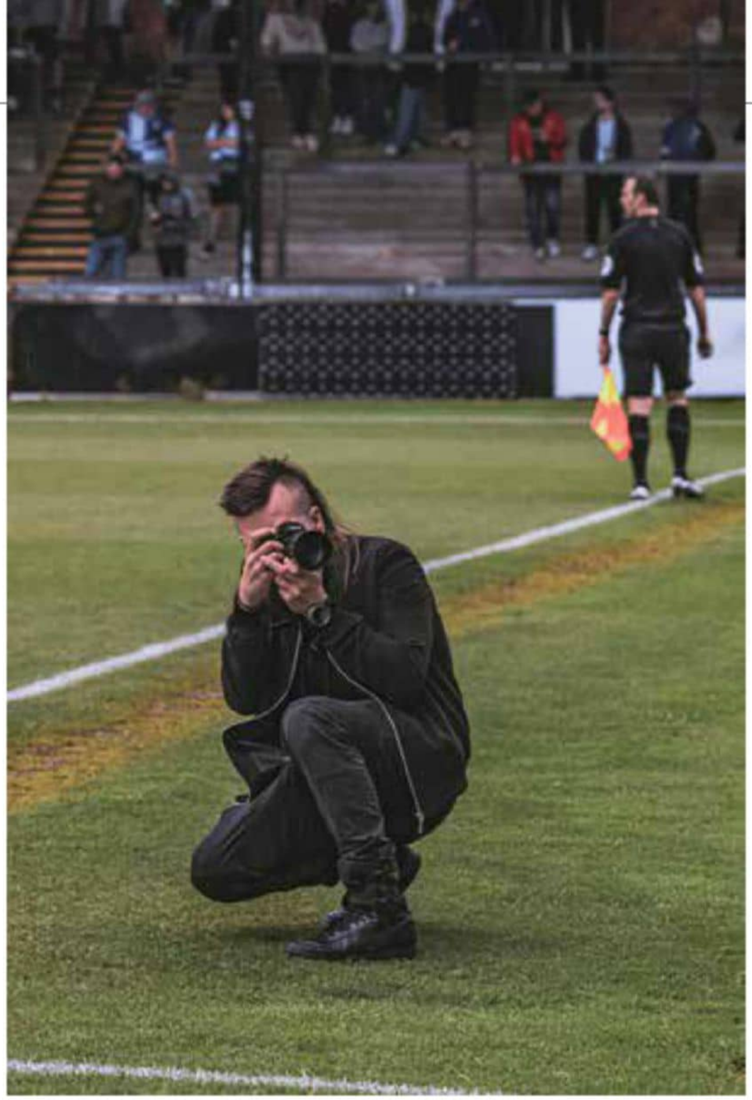
Even when their work is published, freelance photojournalists often struggle to retain credit or control over their images. Some contracts require contributors to sign over full rights in exchange for a single-use fee, allowing outlets to reuse or resell content without additional compensation.

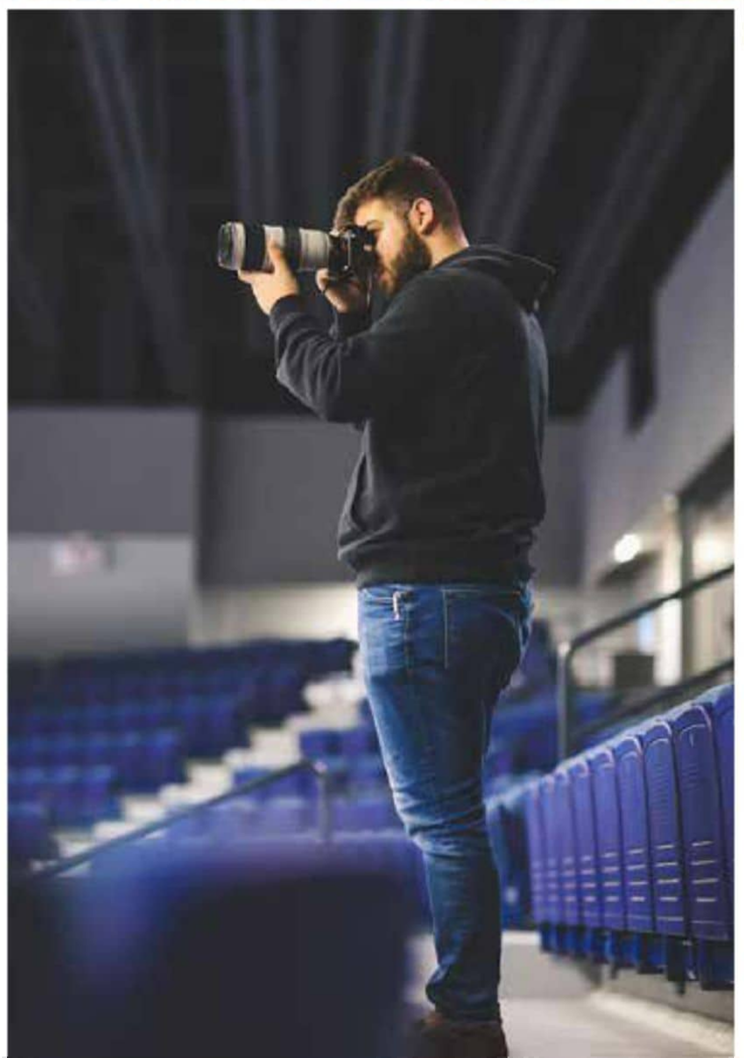
Others find their images used without permission—lifted from social media or websites and reposted without attribution. Chasing copyright violations is time-consuming, expensive, and often fruitless, especially across international borders.

In an ideal system, the people risking their lives to document history would at least own the rights to their own work. In reality, the gig economy prioritises speed, cost-

The New York Times







efficiency, and convenience—often at the expense of fairness and ethics.

The Role of Unions and Advocacy Groups

In recent years, efforts have emerged to support freelance photojournalists in navigating these challenges. Organisations like the National Press Photographers Association (NPPA), the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), and freelance collectives have advocated for fair pay, proper accreditation, and safety training.

Some have created databases of ethical publications that pay freelancers fairly and protect image rights. Others offer grants, legal advice, and insurance packages tailored to freelancers. But these efforts are piecemeal, often relying on donations or member dues. The structural imbalance between media companies and independent contributors remains stark.

The Future: Burnout or Breakthrough?

Despite the risks, many freelance photojournalists remain deeply committed to their work. They believe in bearing witness, in documenting truth, in using imagery to spark conversation and change. But passion alone isn't sustainable.

If the current gig-based model continues unchecked, the field may see increasing burnout, attrition, and homogenisation. Only those with outside income, geographic privilege, or personal connections may be able to afford the risks. That means fewer diverse voices, fewer local perspectives, and fewer untold stories brought to light.

Alternatively, there's a chance for a different path. Media outlets could reexamine their labour practices, treat freelancers as partners rather than expendable assets, and offer fair contracts and timely payments. Audiences could support independent journalists directly through crowdfunding, subscriptions, and donations. Platforms could prioritise transparency in image sourcing and credit.

Takeaways

Freelance photojournalists are the backbone of global visual journalism, especially in the digital age. They go where others can't or won't. They tell the stories that matter, often at great personal cost. But their place in the gig economy exposes a hard truth: the world relies on their work, but rarely supports it.

Independence is powerful—but without protection, fair compensation, and institutional respect, it becomes a burden. The question isn't whether freelance photojournalism will survive—it's whether it will be allowed to thrive without breaking the people who carry the lens.

TEXT: ANIRUDH IYER

THE ROLE OF DRONES AND REMOTE CAMERAS IN MODERN PHOTOJOURNALISM

Photojournalism has always been about capturing the truth: raw, immediate, and unfiltered. But in today's high-tech landscape, that mission is being reshaped by tools that expand the reach and perspective of visual storytellers. Among the most significant of these tools are drones and remote cameras. Once reserved for military operations or Hollywood productions, these technologies are becoming more essential to journalists reporting on everything from war zones to climate disasters. They've changed how stories are seen and who gets to see them.

Image: Droneman

Expanding the Field of View

Traditional photojournalists have always relied on being physically present to get the shot. That's still crucial. But drones and remote cameras allow for an expanded field of vision, quite literally. Drones can capture sweeping aerial views, chase moving subjects across rugged terrain, and reveal scenes inaccessible to humans. Remote cameras, often set up in risky or unreachable locations, provide a way to continuously document events without putting the photographer in harm's way.

These technologies don't just offer new angles, they provide entirely new layers of context. An aerial shot of a protest, for instance, can show its scale in a way a ground-level image never could. Similarly, a remote camera can capture the moments before and after a key event - things that might be missed in the scramble of live coverage.

Safety and Access in Dangerous Environments

Photojournalists often find themselves in the world's most dangerous places: war zones, disaster areas, sites of civil unrest. Getting close enough to document the story while staying safe has always been a delicate balance. Drones and remote cameras tip the scales.

During the conflict in Ukraine, for example, journalists have used drones to document damage to infrastructure, troop movements, and civilian conditions—without exposing themselves to frontline risks. In natural disaster zones like wildfires or hurricanes, drones can fly over unstable terrain or collapsing structures, capturing critical visuals while the journalist stays out of harm's way.

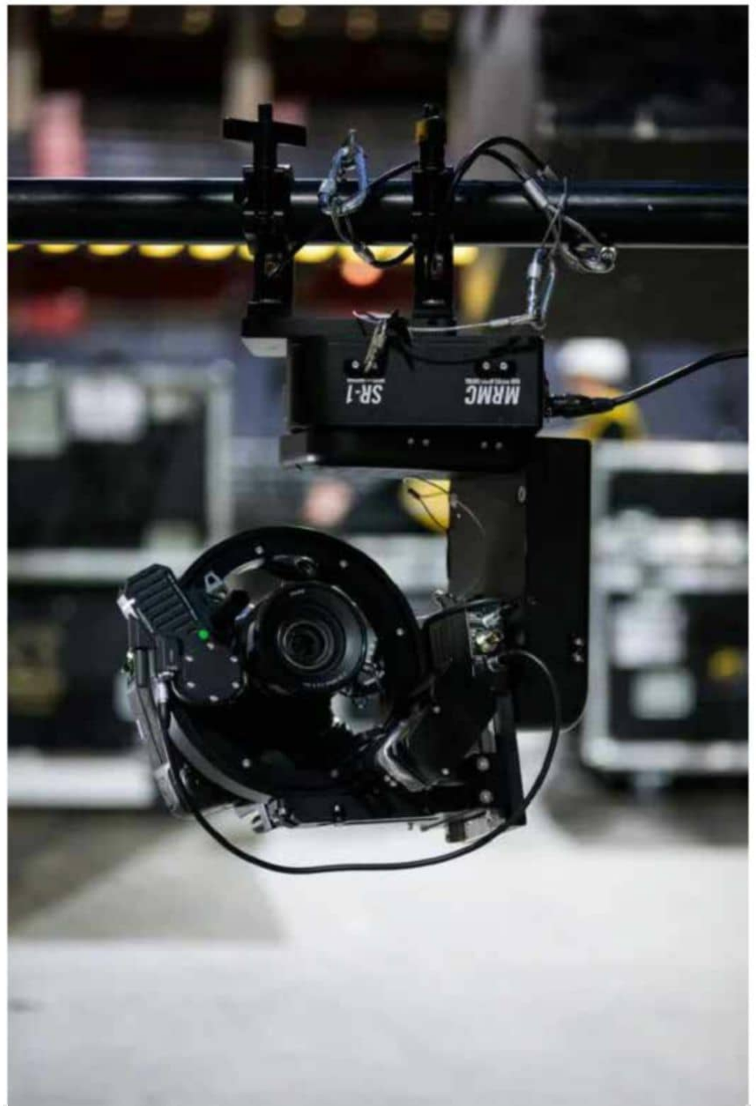
Remote cameras, meanwhile, have been placed in areas prone to sudden violence, such as protest zones or wildlife corridors in environmental reporting. These cameras can be triggered by motion or operated from a distance, allowing for ongoing documentation without requiring a human presence.

Ethics, Privacy, and Grey Areas

With new tools come new responsibilities. Drones and remote cameras raise significant ethical and legal questions. Just because you can capture something doesn't always mean you should.

Privacy concerns are especially sensitive. In densely populated areas, a drone might inadvertently capture private moments on balconies, in backyards, or through windows. Similarly, placing remote cameras in public spaces can blur the line between journalism and surveillance.

Then there are the legal hurdles. Drone regulations vary wildly between countries and even within regions. Journalists must navigate a complex web of flight permissions, no-fly zones, and altitude restrictions. Violating these can lead to fines, or worse, the loss of equipment, credentials, and most definitely, legal challenges.



Responsible photojournalism demands more than technical skill. It requires ethical judgment of balancing the public's right to know against the individual's right to privacy. The best practitioners approach drones and remote cameras not as toys, but as powerful tools that must be wielded carefully.

Changing the Nature of Storytelling

What these technologies offer isn't just more coverage, it's different storytelling! Aerial footage allows for sweeping narrative arcs. Time-lapse sequences from remote cameras can show change over time in a visceral way - deforestation, migration, urban sprawl.

This shift impacts how audiences engage with news. Visuals from drones are more cinematic, often resembling scenes from a documentary or film. That has benefits including greater emotional resonance, higher engagement, but it also raises concerns. If photojournalism becomes too polished, too smooth, does it start to feel less authentic?

To avoid this trap, many journalists pair drone and remote footage with on-the-ground images and reporting. The combination provides both scale and intimacy, a macro and micro view that gives a fuller picture of events. It's not about replacing traditional methods, but enhancing them.

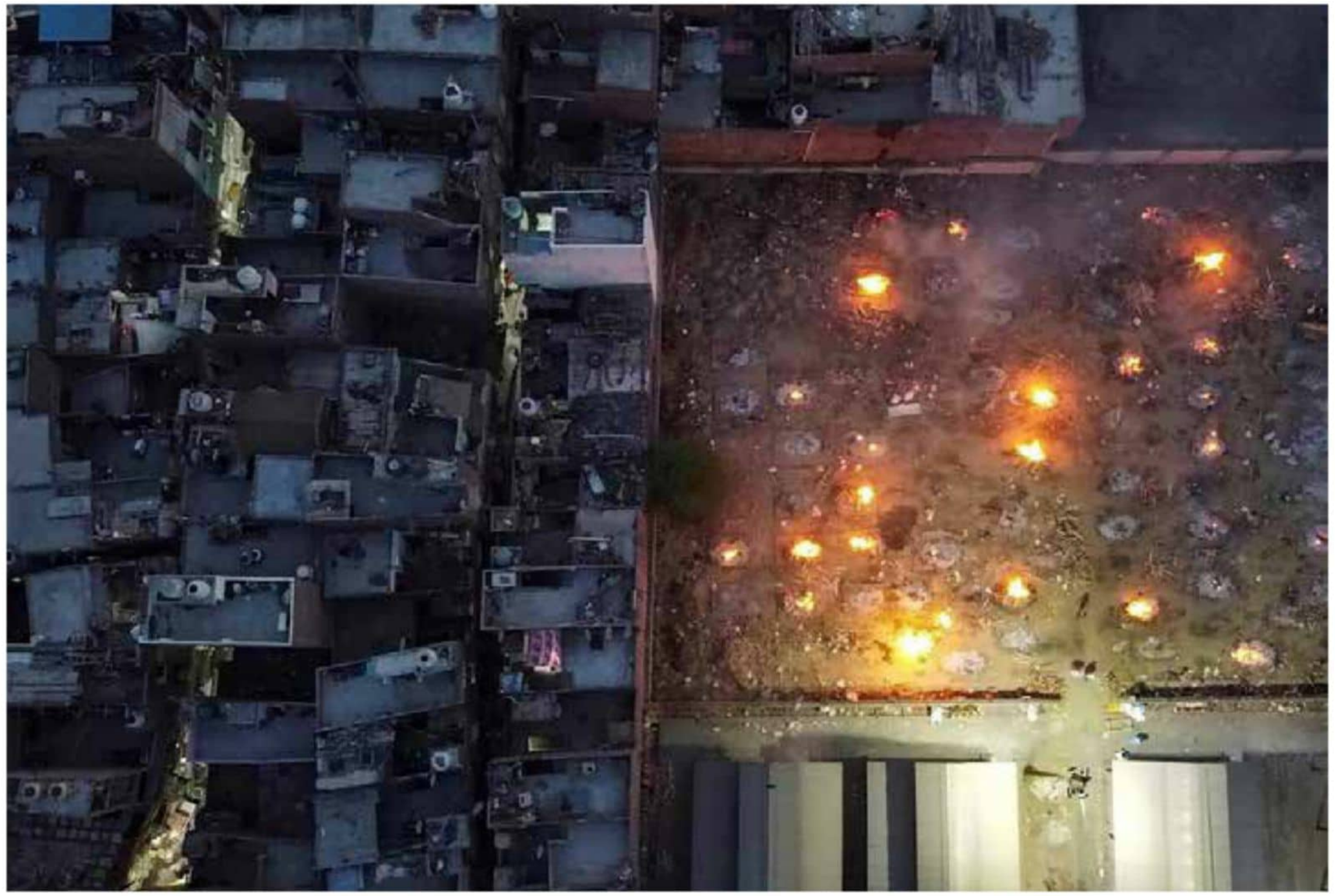


Image: Danish Siddiqui / Reuters

Accessibility and Democratisation

One of the most transformative aspects of drones and remote cameras is their increasing affordability. Once prohibitively expensive, drones are now accessible to freelancers and small news outlets. Remote camera kits can be built on a modest budget with off-the-shelf parts.

This democratisation opens the door for underrepresented voices. Indigenous journalists, grassroots activists, and citizen reporters are using these tools to tell their own stories, often from perspectives overlooked by mainstream media. A drone flying over a pipeline construction site isn't just capturing visuals—it's documenting resistance, cultural preservation, and environmental risk.

However, this accessibility also means more noise. Not all drone footage is created equal, and without journalistic training or ethical standards, the line between reporting and propaganda can blur. The key challenge is curating quality, verifying authenticity, and maintaining journalistic rigour in an environment saturated with visuals.

Challenges and Limitations

While drones and remote cameras have revolutionised visual journalism, they aren't without drawbacks. Battery life, signal interference, weather, and line-of-sight limitations can all impede drone operations. Remote cameras are susceptible to theft, vandalism, or technical failures. Both require planning, permits, and in some cases, special certifications.

PLUS II
Transceiver

Image: Tom Bol Photography

And then there's the human factor. No drone can replicate the instinct, empathy, and storytelling sense of a seasoned photojournalist. A remote camera can capture a moment, but it can't frame it with intention. These tools are extensions, not replacements, of human vision and judgment.

The Road Ahead

Looking forward, the integration of artificial intelligence, real-time streaming, and advanced image processing will push these tools even further. Drones may one day identify developing news in real-time using onboard AI. Remote cameras could use machine learning to filter and flag significant moments as they happen.

But for now, the core role of these tools remains clear: they expand the reach, depth, and safety of visual journalism. They empower photographers to tell bigger stories, more safely, and from more angles than ever before. Used wisely, they reinforce the fundamental mission of journalism—to witness, to reveal, to inform.

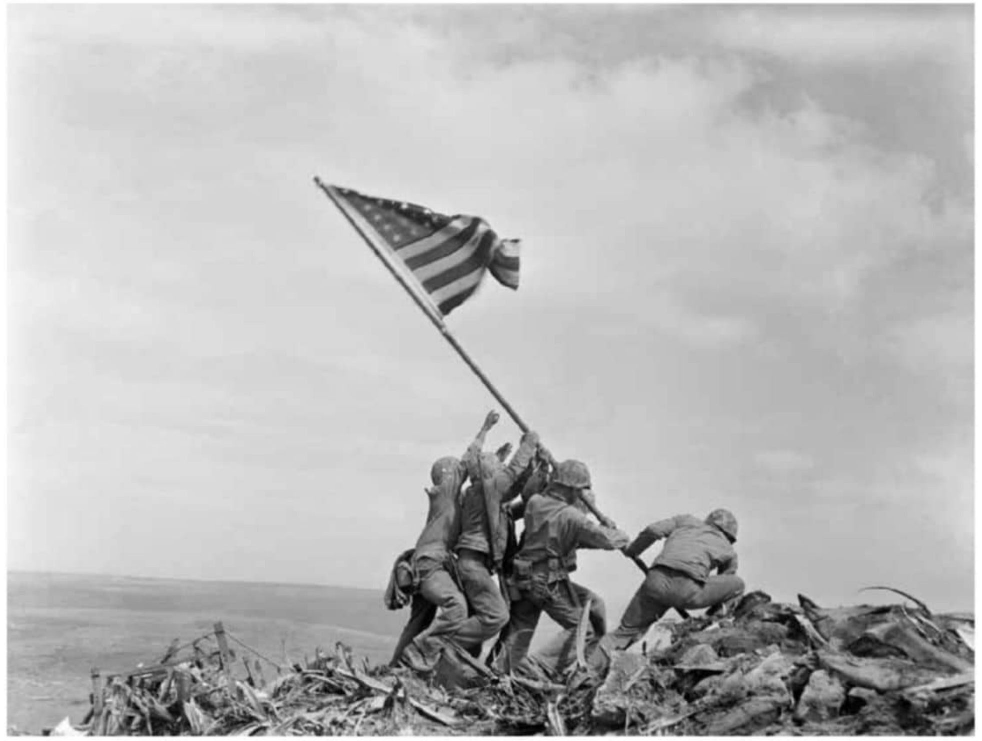
In a world flooded with images, clarity matters more than ever. And in the hands of responsible journalists, drones and remote cameras are helping provide just that—clearer stories, truer perspectives, and a broader view of the truth.

TEXT: ANIRUDH IYER

Image: Tomas Van Houtryve

ICONIC
PHOTOJOURNALISM MOMENTS THAT CHANGED HISTORY

Photojournalism doesn't just capture moments—it defines them. A single image can alter public opinion, expose injustice, rally movements, and even spark revolutions. Throughout history, certain photographs have transcended their time, becoming symbols of collective memory and catalysts for change. This article explores some of the most iconic photojournalism moments that have left an indelible mark on the world.



1. Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima (1945)

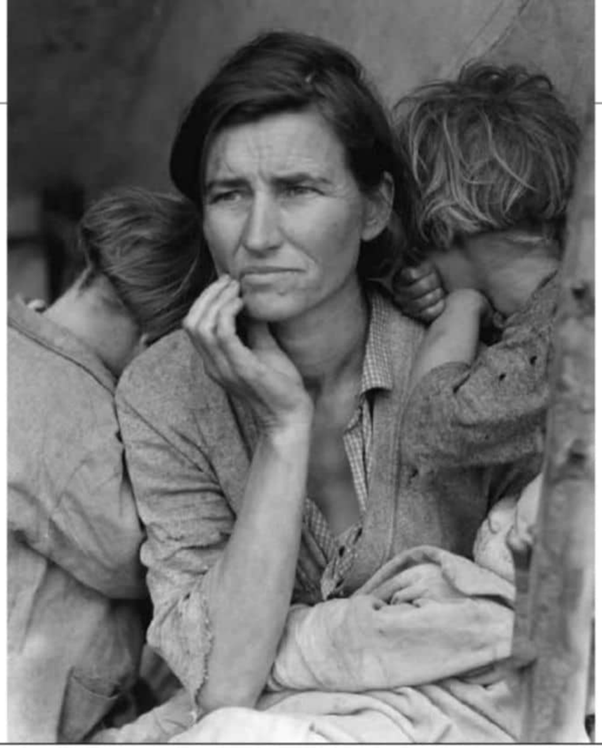
Photographer: Joe Rosenthal

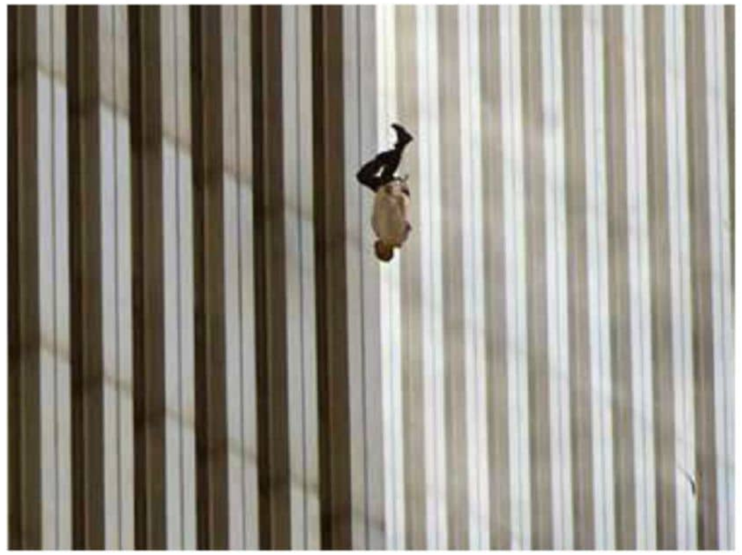
Captured during World War II, this Pulitzer Prize-winning image of U.S. Marines raising the American flag atop Mount Suribachi became an emblem of American resilience and sacrifice. It was widely reproduced, used for war bond drives, and later immortalised as a statue in Washington, D.C. More than just a battlefield shot, it became a universal symbol of hope and victory.

2. Migrant Mother (1936)

Photographer: Dorothea Lange

During the Great Depression, Dorothea Lange's haunting portrait of Florence Owens Thompson and her children in California's migrant camps humanised economic despair. Commissioned by the U.S. Farm Security Administration, this image brought national attention to the plight of destitute families and helped justify social welfare programmes.





3. The Falling Man (2001)

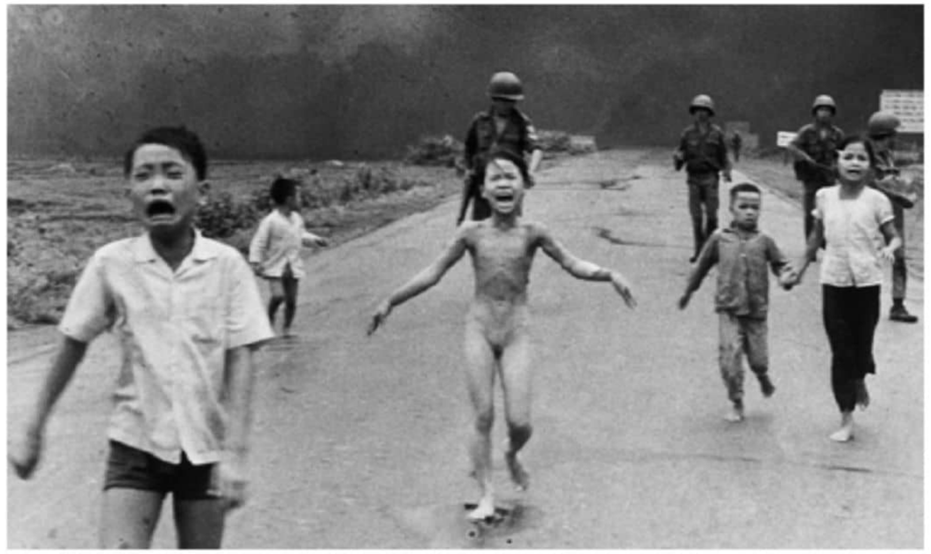
Photographer: Richard Drew

Taken during the September 11 attacks, this chilling image of a man falling from the World Trade Center captured the horror and surreal tragedy of that day. Controversial and often omitted from mainstream coverage, the photograph remains one of the most haunting representations of modern terrorism and personal vulnerability.

4. Napalm Girl (1972)

Photographer: Nick Ut

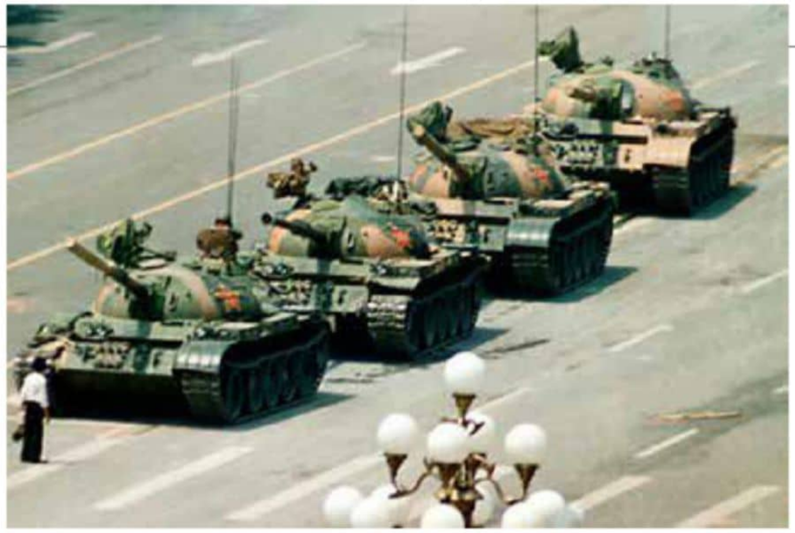
A young girl, Kim Phuc, runs naked and screaming after a napalm attack during the Vietnam War. This Pulitzer Prize-winning photo shocked the world and intensified anti-war sentiment in the U.S. and beyond. The raw suffering depicted made it impossible to ignore the human cost of the Vietnam War.

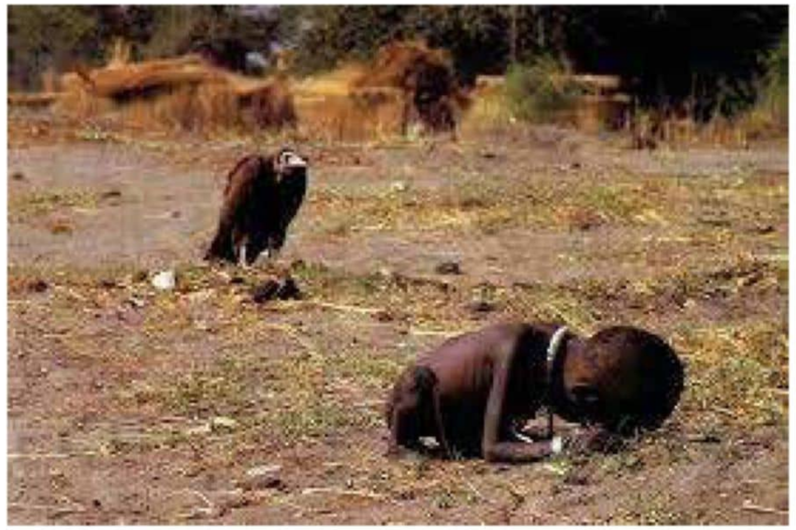


5. Tank Man (1989)

Photographer: Jeff Widener *(Associated Press)*

During the Tiananmen Square protests in Beijing, an unidentified man stood defiantly in front of a line of Chinese tanks. Though his identity and fate remain unknown, the image has become an enduring symbol of individual resistance against authoritarianism.





6. The Vulture and the Little Girl (1993)

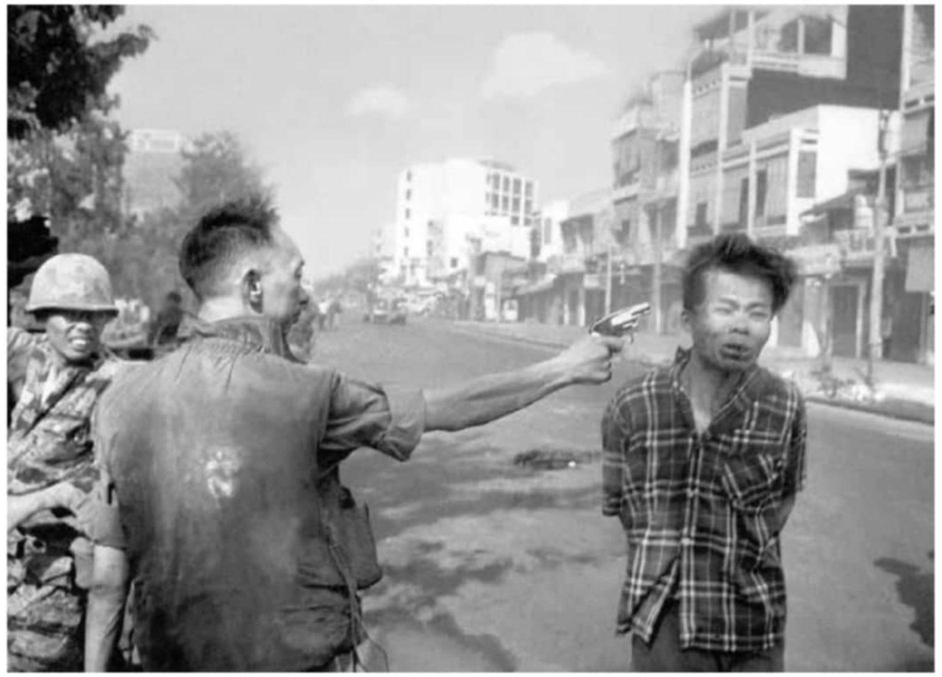
Photographer: Kevin Carter

Taken during the Sudan famine, this image shows a starving child collapsed on the ground as a vulture looms nearby. It sparked global outrage and intense debate about photojournalistic ethics. Carter won the Pulitzer Prize, but the emotional toll contributed to his suicide the following year. The photo forced a reckoning with how the media documents suffering.

7. Execution of a Viet Cong Prisoner (1968)

Photographer: Eddie Adams

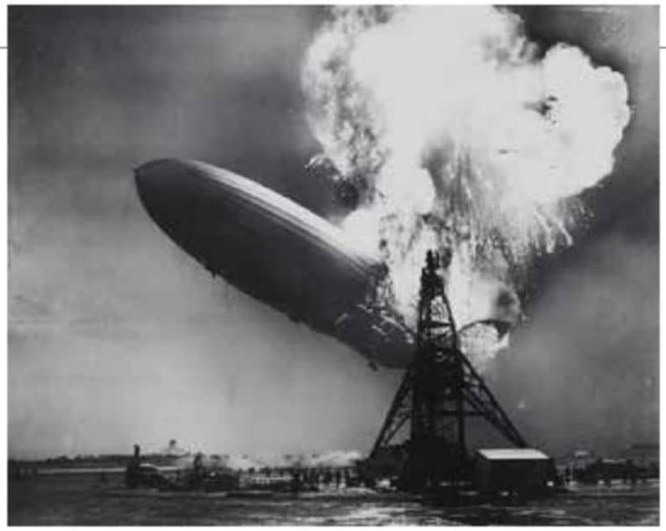
This shocking image captured South Vietnamese police chief Nguyen Ngoc Loan executing a Viet Cong prisoner at point-blank range. Broadcast around the world, it influenced public perception of the Vietnam War and raised questions about justice, humanity, and wartime brutality.

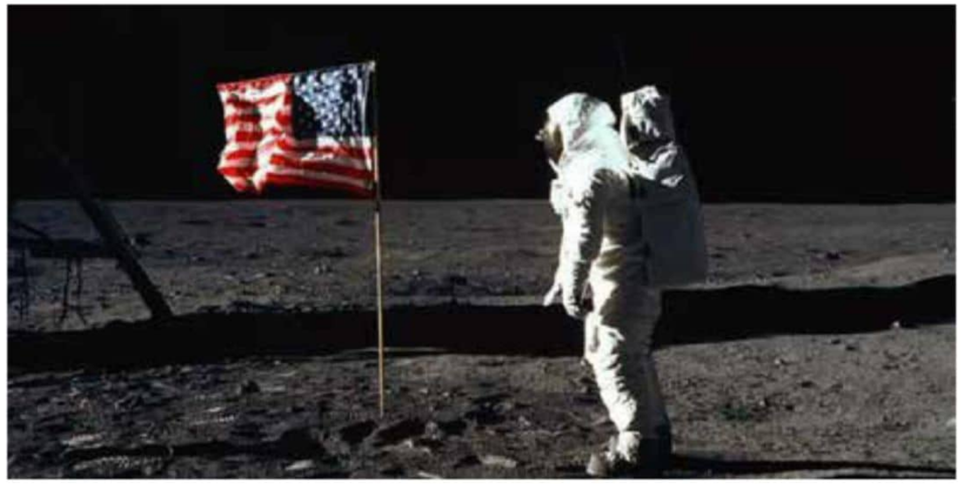


8. The Hindenburg Disaster (1937)

Photographer: Sam Shere

The explosion of the German airship Hindenburg was one of the first major disasters captured on film. Shere's photograph of the burning airship crashing to the ground was broadcast across newspapers, signalling the end of airship travel and underscoring the power of visual media to depict catastrophe.





9. Man on the Moon (1969)

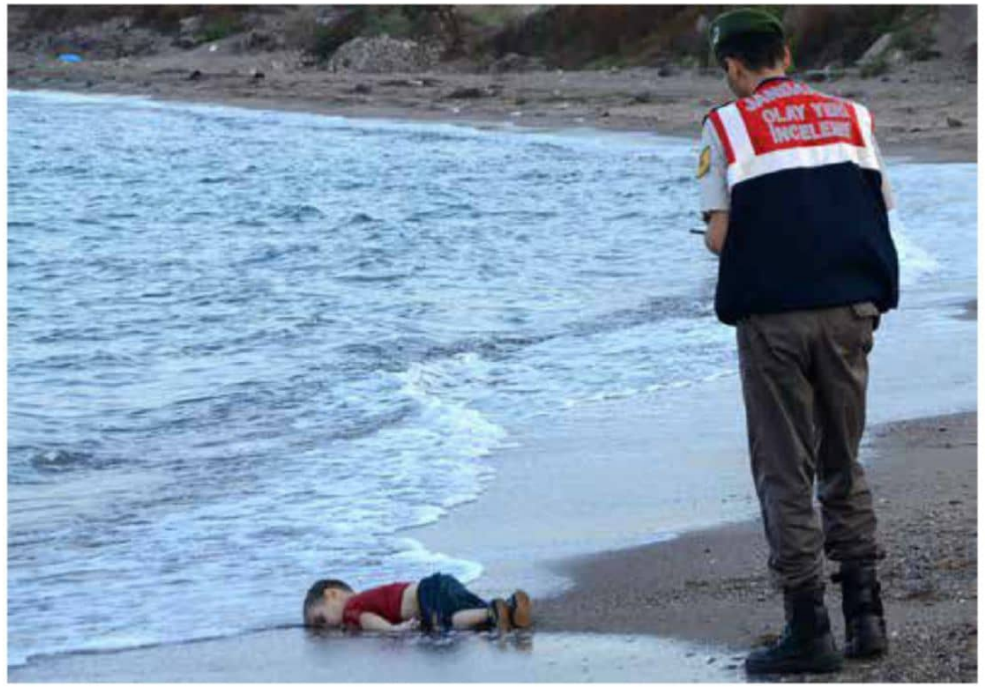
Photographer: Neil Armstrong / NASA

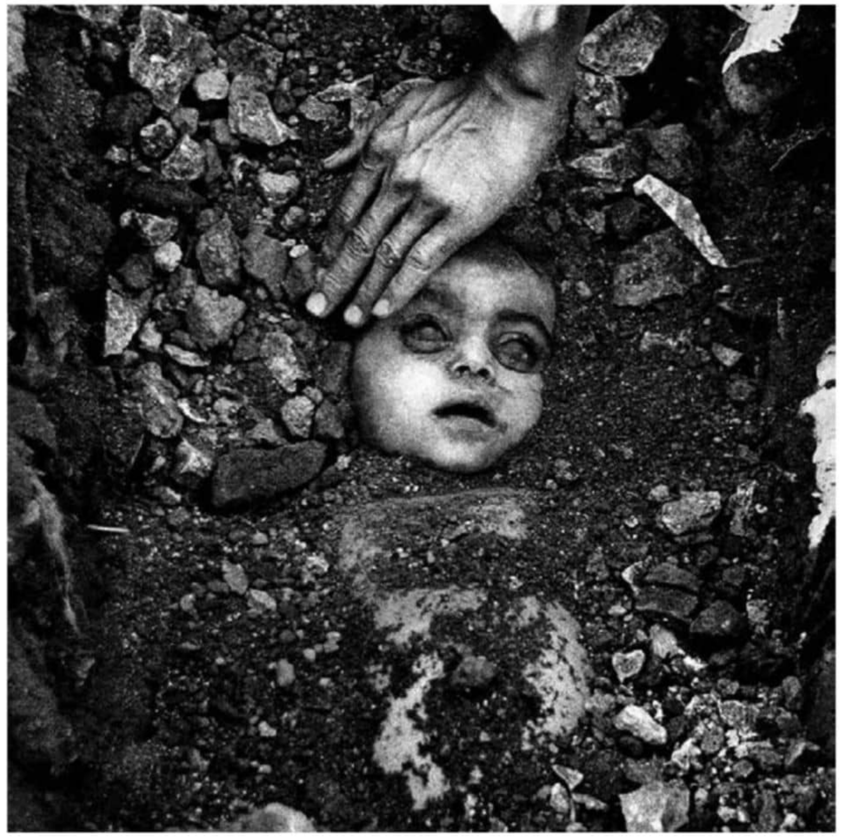
Although not a photojournalist in the traditional sense, Armstrong's image of Buzz Aldrin standing on the Moon became a defining moment of the 20th century. It symbolised human innovation and the triumph of exploration, and it was viewed by millions worldwide, reinforcing photography's role in documenting monumental achievements.

10. Alan Kurdi on the Beach (2015)

Photographer: Nilüfer Demir

This photograph of a Syrian toddler's lifeless body washed ashore in Turkey jolted the world into recognising the gravity of the refugee crisis. The image went viral and prompted public outcry and policy debates across Europe. It demonstrated the modern power of digital-era photojournalism to evoke global empathy almost instantly.





11. Bhopal Gas Tragedy (1984)

Photographer: Raghu Rai

One of the most gut-wrenching images in the history of Indian photojournalism, this haunting black-and-white photograph shows a child partially buried in the earth—lifeless eyes open, her face and body covered in dust and rubble. Captured in the aftermath of the Bhopal gas leak, the world's worst industrial disaster, the image brought home the unimaginable scale of human suffering caused by corporate negligence. Over 3,000 people died instantly, with thousands more succumbing to injuries in the weeks and months that followed. Rai's photograph, with its raw emotional intensity, transformed a local tragedy into a global wake-up call about accountability, industrial safety, and environmental justice. It remains one of the most searing testaments to documentary photography's power to confront, unsettle, and demand change.

12. Pandemic Pyres: Haunting Portrait of COVID-19 in India

Photographer: Danish Siddiqui

In April 2021, as India was engulfed in the devastating second wave of COVID-19, Reuters photojournalist Danish Siddiqui captured a moment that froze the world in solemn awe — a drone-shot image showing dozens of funeral pyres burning simultaneously at a crematorium in New Delhi.

This image, titled "Mass Cremations during India's COVID-19 Second Wave," wasn't just a photograph — it was a grim ledger of human loss, systemic collapse, and public grief. The sheer number of burning pyres, the overwhelming sense of scale, and the clinical top-down angle conveyed the scale of the crisis more powerfully than any statistic or news report.

Siddiqui's image laid bare the failure of infrastructure, the collapse of healthcare systems, and the raw trauma families were enduring. It forced global audiences to confront the reality behind euphemisms like "unprecedented surge" or "rising cases." In doing so, it held leaders and institutions accountable, demanding attention where silence had reigned.

Tragically, Siddiqui was killed just months later while on assignment in Afghanistan, documenting Taliban clashes. His legacy lives on not only in his photographs but in the courage and humanity with which he captured history as it unfolded.

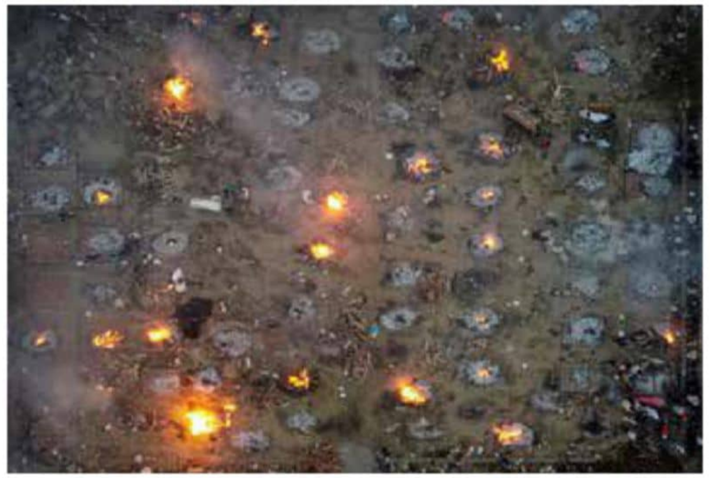


Image: Danish Siddiqui / Reuters

His COVID-19 image stands as a painful yet necessary reminder: that documentary photography doesn't just inform — it sears itself into collective memory, becoming part of our global conscience.

TEXT: RAJAN GUPTA

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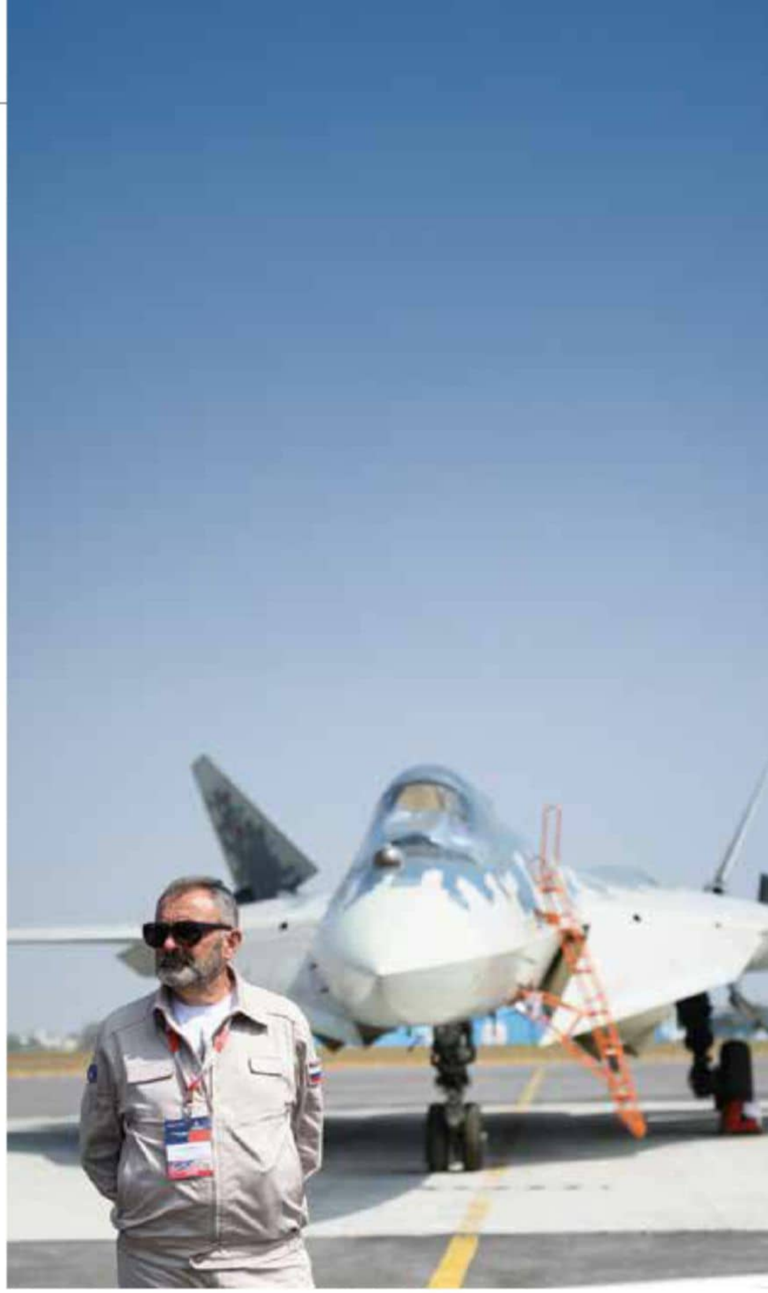
Airshows are spectacular events that combine engineering marvels, human skill, and breathtaking visuals. For photographers, they present a unique opportunity to capture the essence of aviation—speed, power, and elegance. However, aerial photography at airshows straddles a fine line between artistic expression and journalistic documentation. While some photographers aim to create visually stunning compositions, others focus on accurately portraying events for news and historical records. This article explores the intersection of art and journalism in aerial photography, examining the challenges, ethical considerations, and the evolving role of photographers in this high-flying domain.

AIRSHOWS AND AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY:

THE FINE LINE BETWEEN ART AND JOURNALISM



The Artistic Perspective: Capturing Beauty in Motion

Aerial photography at airshows often leans toward artistry. Photographers seek to freeze moments of dramatic action, jets roaring past in tight formation, smoke trails painting the sky, or the iconic "knife-edge" passes that defy gravity. These images are not just records of events; they are carefully composed works of art.

Key Elements of Artistic Aerial Photography

1. **Composition and Timing –** The best airshow photos rely on perfect timing and framing. A split-second delay can mean missing a critical moment, such as a jet breaking the sound barrier or a formation team executing a synchronised manoeuvre.
2. **Lighting and Atmosphere –** The interplay of sunlight, clouds, and smoke trails adds depth and drama. Backlit aircraft, golden-hour shots, and silhouettes against a setting sun elevate photographs from mere snapshots to fine art.
3. **Emotion and Storytelling –** Great aviation photos tell a story. The intensity of a pilot's focus, the roar of engines, and the reactions of the crowd can all be conveyed through a single image.

Artistic photographers often post-process their images to enhance colours, contrast, and sharpness, pushing the boundaries of reality to create visually striking pieces.

The Journalistic Approach: Documenting Reality

While artistic photographers prioritise aesthetics, photojournalists covering airshows have a different mission: to document events accurately and inform the public. Their work appears in newspapers, magazines, and online news platforms, where factual representation matters more than creative embellishment.

Principles of Aviation Photojournalism

1. **Accuracy and Authenticity –** Journalistic integrity demands that images remain unaltered in ways that mislead viewers. While basic adjustments (exposure, cropping) are acceptable, heavy manipulation that changes the context of a scene is unethical.
2. **Newsworthiness –** Photojournalists focus on key moments: record-breaking performances, rare aircraft displays, or unexpected incidents (such as emergencies or crashes). Their work serves as a historical record.
3. **Safety and Ethics –** Unlike artistic photographers who may prioritise the perfect shot, journalists must consider safety regulations and avoid interfering with pilots or airspace protocols.

The 2011 Reno Air Race crash, where a P-51 Mustang tragically crashed into spectators, highlighted the role of photojournalists in documenting both the spectacle and the risks of airshows. Their images provided crucial evidence for investigations while respecting the gravity of the event.

The Ethical Dilemma: When Art and Journalism Collide

The line between art and journalism blurs when photographers must decide how much editing is acceptable. For instance:

- **Selective framing –** Omitting parts of a scene to emphasise drama can alter public perception.
- **Colour grading –** Enhancing skies and smoke for artistic effect may misrepresent actual conditions.
- **Composite images –** Combining multiple shots into one (e.g. merging different aircraft formations) creates compelling art but violates journalistic standards.

The debate intensifies when images go viral. A heavily edited photo might win awards in an art competition, but face backlash if presented as factual journalism.

The Impact of Social Media and Technology

The rise of drone cameras has revolutionised aerial photography, offering new perspectives but also raising concerns:

- Drones provide stunning overhead views but can interfere with airshow safety.
- AI-enhanced editing tools make it easier to manipulate images, further complicating the distinction between art and journalism.
- Instant sharing on platforms like Instagram blurs intent—is the photographer an artist, a journalist, or both?

A word of caution: DO NOT fly drones at an active airshow as it is restricted airspace - it's dangerous for the aircraft and you might also get arrested for doing so. Only fly drones after receiving explicit permission in a closed airspace.

Balancing Creativity and Responsibility

Airshow photography exists in a unique space where artistry and journalism intersect. While artistic photographers push creative boundaries to capture the beauty of flight, photojournalists adhere to ethical standards to document reality. Both play vital roles in preserving aviation history and inspiring future generations. As technology evolves, photographers must remain mindful of their responsibilities—whether crafting a masterpiece or reporting the facts. The sky is not just a canvas; it's also a stage where truth and artistry must find harmony.

TEXT: ANIRUDH IYER

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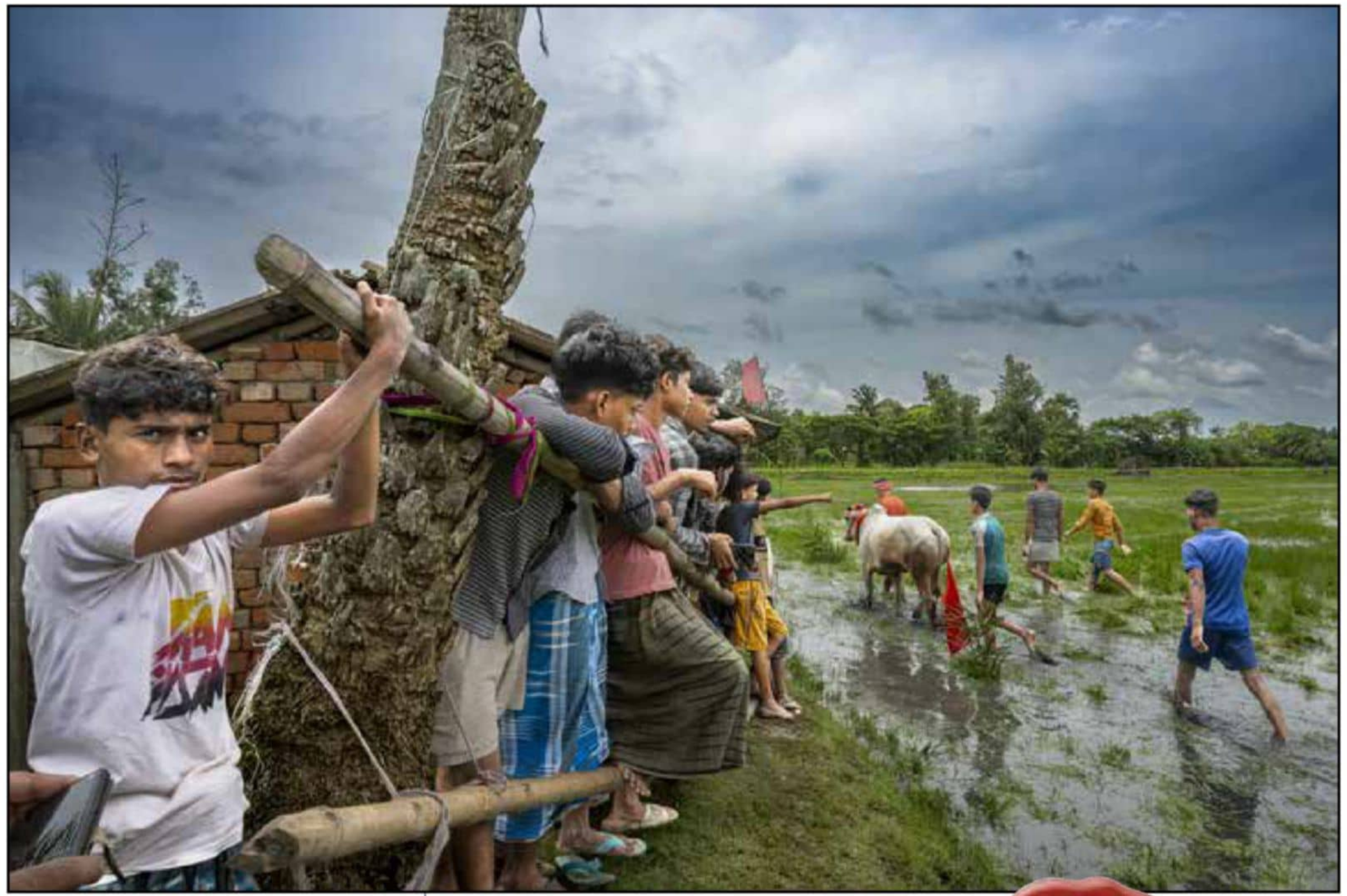
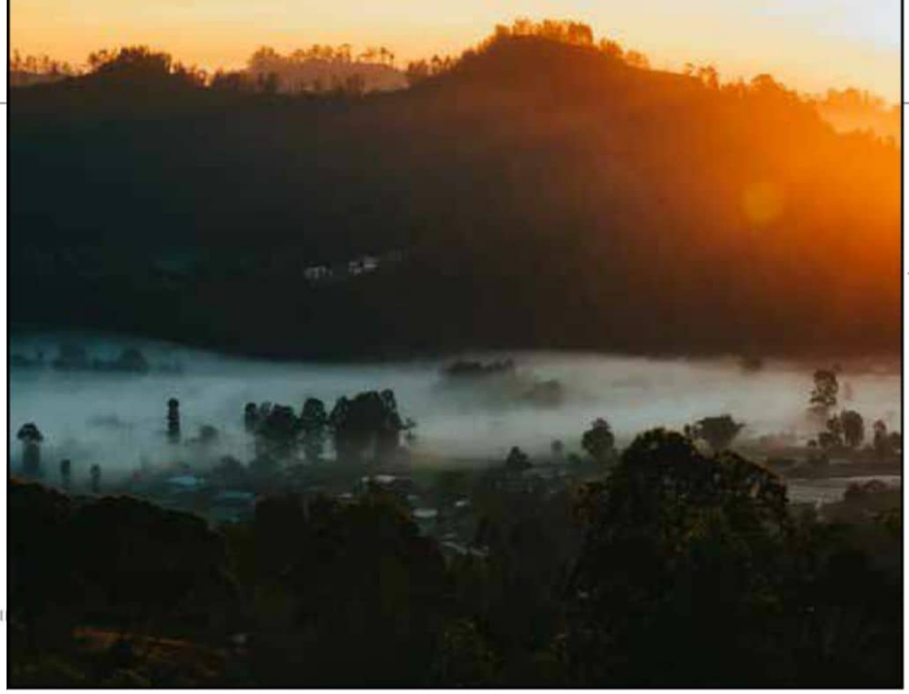


Name: Tista Ghosh
Camera & Lens: Nikon Zf, 24-70 mm
Focal Length: 24 mm
Shutter Speed: 1/320s
Aperture: F/13
ISO: 500
Instagram ID: @ghoshtista1234

PIC OF THE MONTH
Asian Photography



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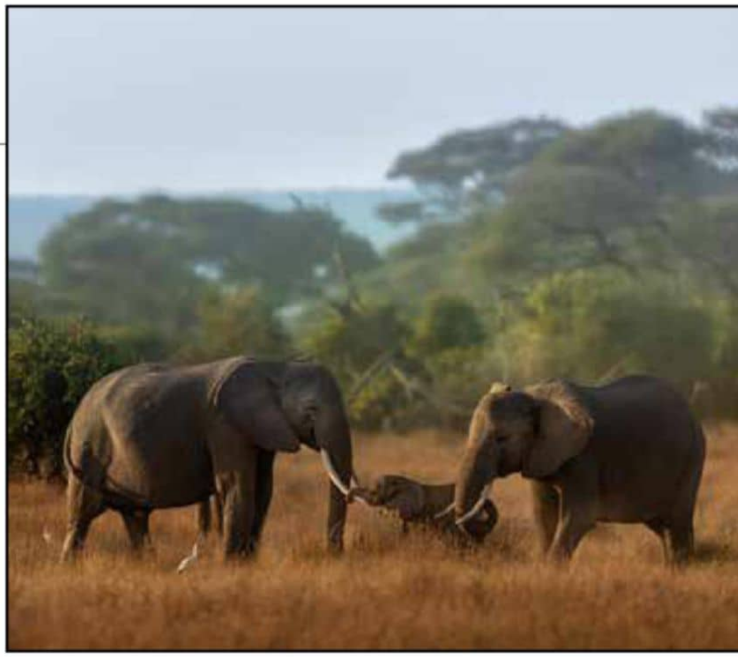
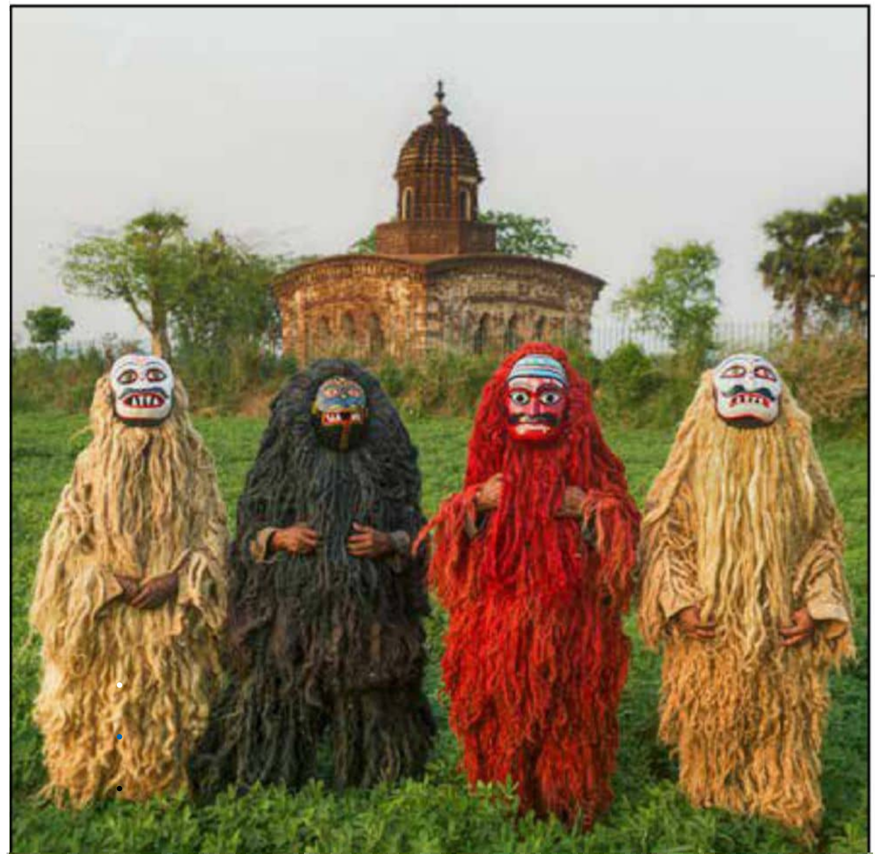
Name: Anirudh Shangari
Camera & Lens: Canon EOS R with Canon RF 100-500 mm F4.5-7.1
Focal length: 100 mm
Shutter Speed: 1/100s
Aperture: F/9.0
ISO: 500
Instagram ID: ashangari95

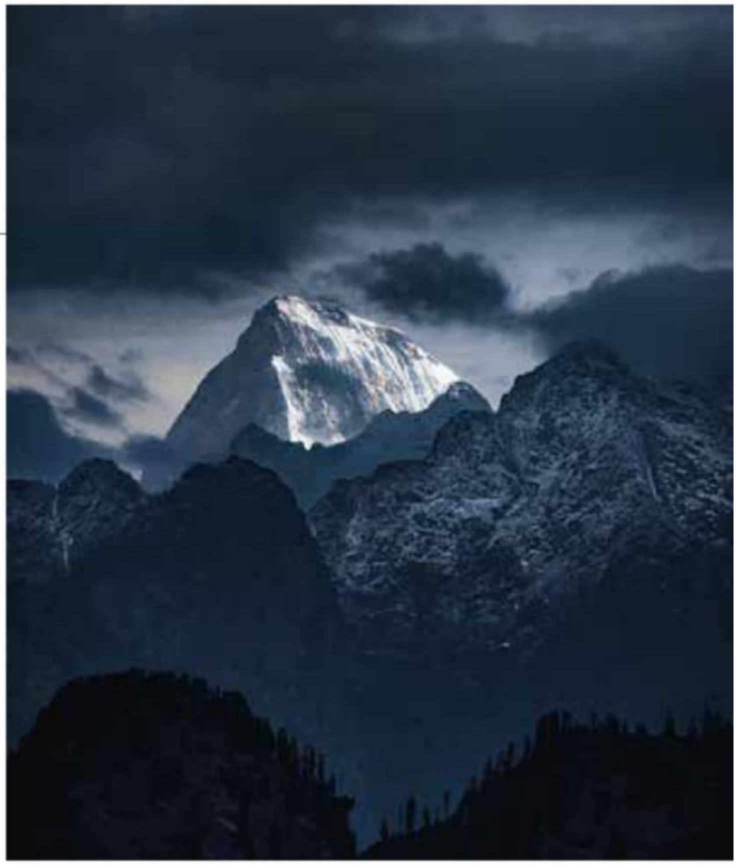
Name: Chandramouli Vidyasaghar
Camera And Lens: Canon R5 & 400 F/2.8
Focal Length: 400 mm
Shutter Speed: 1/3200s
Aperture: F/2.8
ISO: 250
Instagram Handle: @mouli.vc





Name: Navin Paul
Camera & Lens: Nikon D850, Tamron 24-70 mm F/2.8
Focal Length: 30mm
Shutter Speed: 1/100s
Aperture: F/5.6
ISO: 200
Instagram ID: @ navinpaulphotography

Name: Arpan Sharma
Camera & Lens: Canon R5 Mark II + Canon RF 100-500mm f/4.5-7.1L IS USM
Focal length: 100 mm
Shutter Speed: 1/1000 sec
Aperture: f/10.0
ISO: 500
Instagram ID: @arpansharma_01

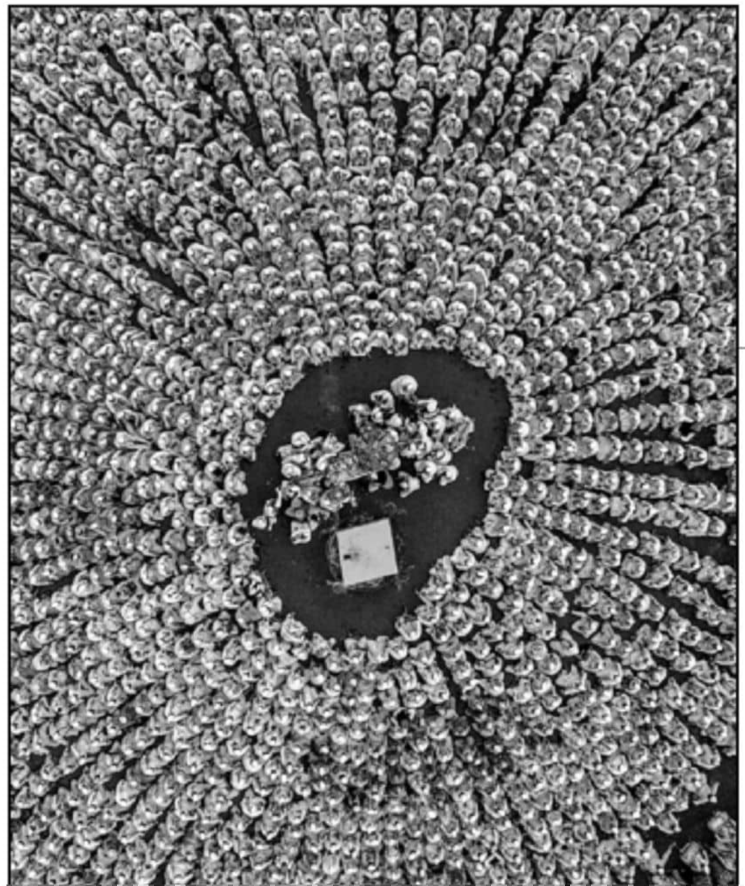


Name: Samay Raj Sath
Camera: Nikon D5300 & 70-300 mm
Focal length: 165 mm
Shutter Speed: 1/1600s
Aperture: F/5
ISO: 320
Instagram ID: @samay_raj_sah_photography

Name: P. Arulmurugan
Camera & Lens: Sony A7 IV
Focal length: 600 mm
Shutter Speed: 1/1600s
Aperture: F/10
ISO: 3200
Instagram ID: @arul.wildography

Name: Souvik Layek
Camera & Lens: Sony a7III, Sony 24-105 mm F/4
Focal length: 105 mm
Shutter Speed: 1/50s
Aperture: F/8
ISO: 100
Instagram ID: @souviklayek

Name: Momina Mukherjee
Camera & Lens : Sony A7 IV, Sony FE 70-200 mm F/2.8
Focal Length: 197 mm
Shutter Speed: 1/800s
Aperture: F/10
ISO: 800
Instagram ID: @momina.photography



Name: Jayesh Dilipsing Rajput
Camera & Lens: DJI Air 3s
Focal length: 24 mm
Shutter Speed: 1/1250s
Aperture: F/1.8
ISO: 100

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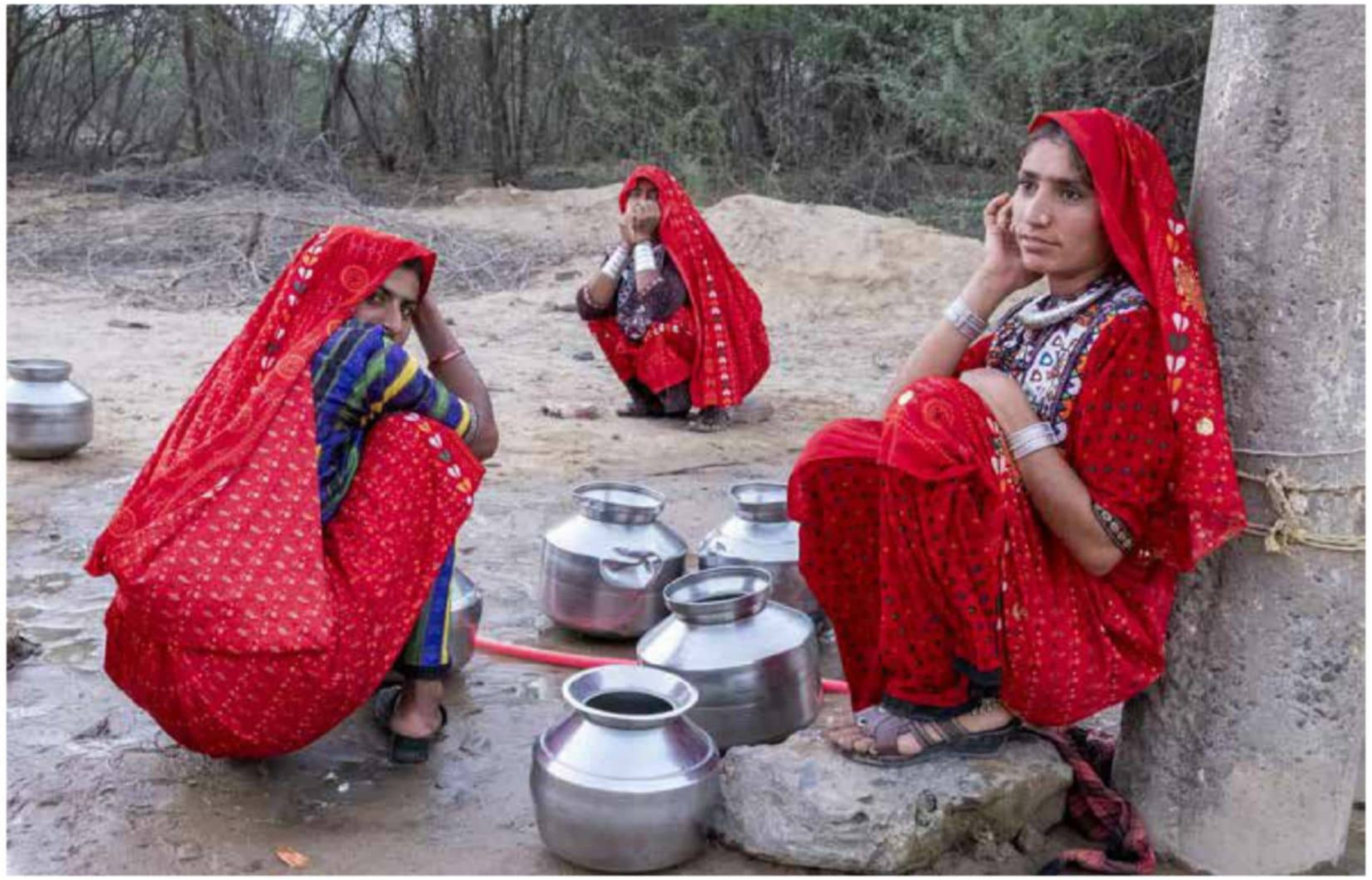

I have two missions in life – to see India in all its beauty and to help every camera owner become a great photographer. I am a travel photographer, photography mentor, photo-tour leader, and a columnist.

For over three decades, I've been travelling across different parts of India, capturing the rich and diverse flavours of our incredible country. I was born into a family that owned an Agfa Click III, and my father was an amateur photographer. My own journey began in 1995 when I bought my first camera with the money I earned from giving tuitions.

Today, I'm the Founder and Chief Educator at SIA Photography. Since 2011, I've had the privilege of training more than 6000 people across the globe through my photography workshops, photowalks, photo-tours, and online sessions. My work has been featured in several national and international publications including National Geographic Traveller, Lonely Planet, Timeout Explorer (UK), The Times (London, UK), and many more. I've also been featured in The Hindu, Indian Express, The Times of India, The Hindustan Times, and Deccan Chronicle, among others. Over the years, I've shot with a variety of cameras and lenses. Currently, I use a Canon R5 with a range of lenses, though my favourite remains the 35mm.

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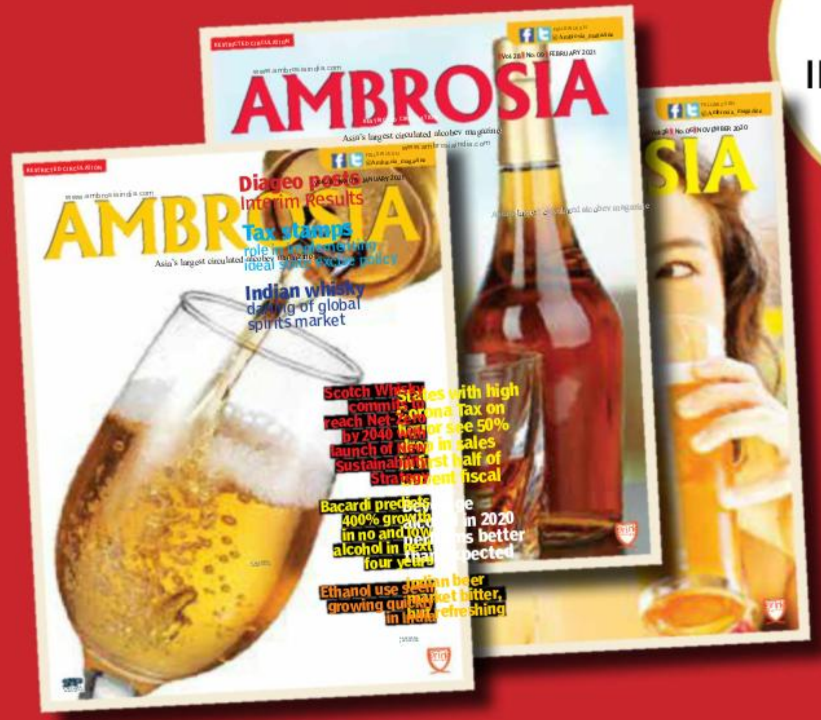

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